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The victory division in Europe...

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THE VICTORY DIVISION IN EUROPE

STORY OF THE FIFTH ARMORED DIVISION

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the men who fought and died for their country with the 5th Armored Division.

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Major General Lunsford E. Oliver

This is the story of the 5th Armored Division; the division which led in the drive that created the Falaise pocket, which was the first of all the Allied units to set foot on German soil and to pierce the Siegfried Line, which in the closing days of the war went out a hundred miles in front of the supporting infantry and fought its way to the Elbe River, closer to Berlin than any other Allied unit, and which was stopped there, not by the Germans, but by order from Ninth Army. Necessarily there can be mentioned in this story only a few of the many acts of heroism which made this record possible. The long months of training for the task ahead, the drudgery, the endurance of cold and wet and fatigue, that contributed to this record could not possibly be adequately portrayed. To have participated with you, men of the 5th Armored Division, in all these things has been the greatest privilege of my life.

It is my hope that in the years to come the same spirit which drove you onward to your achievements in this war will cause you to take the lead in your communities in doing everything possible to make our country a better place in which to live, and to improve our international relations and prevent future wars, so that our heroic dead shall not have died in vain.

Lunsford E. Oliver

Major General, Commanding.

Brig. Gen. Eugene A. Regnier
Commanding, Combat Command A

Combat Command A

To most men in Combat Command A the important highlights in their European campaign were closing the Argentan-Falaise Gap at Argentan, liberating the City of Luxembourg and finally the taking of Tangermunde on the Elbe River after a record-breaking fight of 60 miles in one day. At Tangermunde CC A was only 45 miles from Berlin, the closest penetration to the German capital of any American unit in the war.

The command's two basic units are the 34th Tank Battalion and the 46th Armored Infantry Battalion. The 47th Armored Field Artillery Battalion is normally its supporting artillery. Supporting are the A Cos. of the 22nd Engineers, 628th Tank Destroyers, 127th Ordnance Maintenance, 75th Medics and A Troop of the 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

The 34th commanders have been Lt. Col. Thomas B. Bartel, Major Glenn L. Foote, Lt. Col. Karl L. Scherer, Lt. Col. William L. Cabaniss and Lt. Col. Richard H. Jones. The 46th has been commanded by Lt. Col. William H. Burton, Jr., except for short periods when Lt. Col. Kenneth P. Gilson and Lt. Col. Scott M. Case led the battalion.

Col. John Tupper Cole
Commanding, Combat Command B

Combat Command B

Combat Command B fought its toughest battles at Wallendorf, when the division entered Germany for the first time, and in the bloody Hurtgen Forest. Its longest, fastest run was from Paris to Conde, a 130-mile fight, during the battle for France, and the men of CC B will long remember crossing the Roer and the fight for Rheindahlen.

CC B's tank-infantry teams are taken from its two organic units, the 81st Tank Battalion and the 15th Armored Infantry Battalion. The 71st Armored Field Artillery Battalion is normally its direct artillery support. The B Cos. of the 75th Medics, 22nd Engineers, 127th Ordnance, 628th Tank Destroyers and B Troop of the 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron are supporting units during combat operations.

Col. Hugh J. FitzGerald is the assistant combat commander. The 81st has been led throughout combat by Lt. Col. Le Roy H. Anderson. The 15th started combat with Lt. Col. John S. Wintermute as battalion commander, followed by Lt. Col. Kenneth P. Gilson. Lt. Col. Glenn H. Dickenson, the present commander, has led the battalion for the greatest part of its combat time.

Combat Command R

Originally designed as a reserve command, Combat Command R jumped into the fight the first week of action and its reserve status was forgotten then and there. CC R was the first combat command to enter Germany when it crossed the border in September at Wallendort, had its toughest fight in the Hurtgen Forest and was the first command in the division to hit the Rhine when it captured Orsoy, on the river.

CC R's two units are the 10th Tank Battalion and the 47th Armored Infantry Battalion. Its regularly supporting artillery is the 95th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and supporting companies are normally C Troop of the 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and C Cos. of the 22nd Engineers, 628th Tank Destroyers, 127th Ordnance and 75th Medics.

Since early March, Col. Thomas W. Roane has been CC R's assistant combat commander. The combat command's two task forces are commanded by Lt. Col. William A. Hamberg, tank battalion commander, and Lt. Col. Howard E. Boyer, infantry battalion commander. Both commanders have led their commands through all of the campaigns.

Col. Glen Henry Anderson
Commanding, Combat Command R

Col. Douglas J. Page
Commanding, Division Artillery

Division Artillery

The 5th Armd. Div. Artillery consists of three organic 105 mm. self-propelled howitzer battalions: the 47th, 71st and 95th Armored Field Artillery Battalions. Two other battalions, attached to the division since the first day of combat — the 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 387th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, operate under "Divarty" control. Other artillery battalions have been attached to Divarty for special operations.

Biggest thrill for the artillerymen came when they had a part in the barrage laid down in preparation for the Roer River crossing. They fired almost 10,000 rounds in two hours.

Armored artillery is designed to move and shoot fast. Racing closely behind speeding tank columns, all of the battalions can, and have, rolled off the road into firing positions, with fire direction centers operating, in less than 10 minutes. The fluid, intelligent use of Divarty has been an outstanding feature of the division's success.

ARMY, CORPS AND DIVISION COMMANDERS CONFER

Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson, Commanding Ninth U. S. Army, Maj. Gen. Lunsford E. Oliver, 5th Armored Division Commander, Maj. Gen. A. C. Gillem Jr., Commanding XIII Corps, and Col. Edward G. Forrand, Division Chief of Staff, Confer at Schloss Schulenberg near Neuemuhle, Germany, following the end of offensive operations.

Col. Edward G. Farrand
Chief of Staff

Chief of Staff

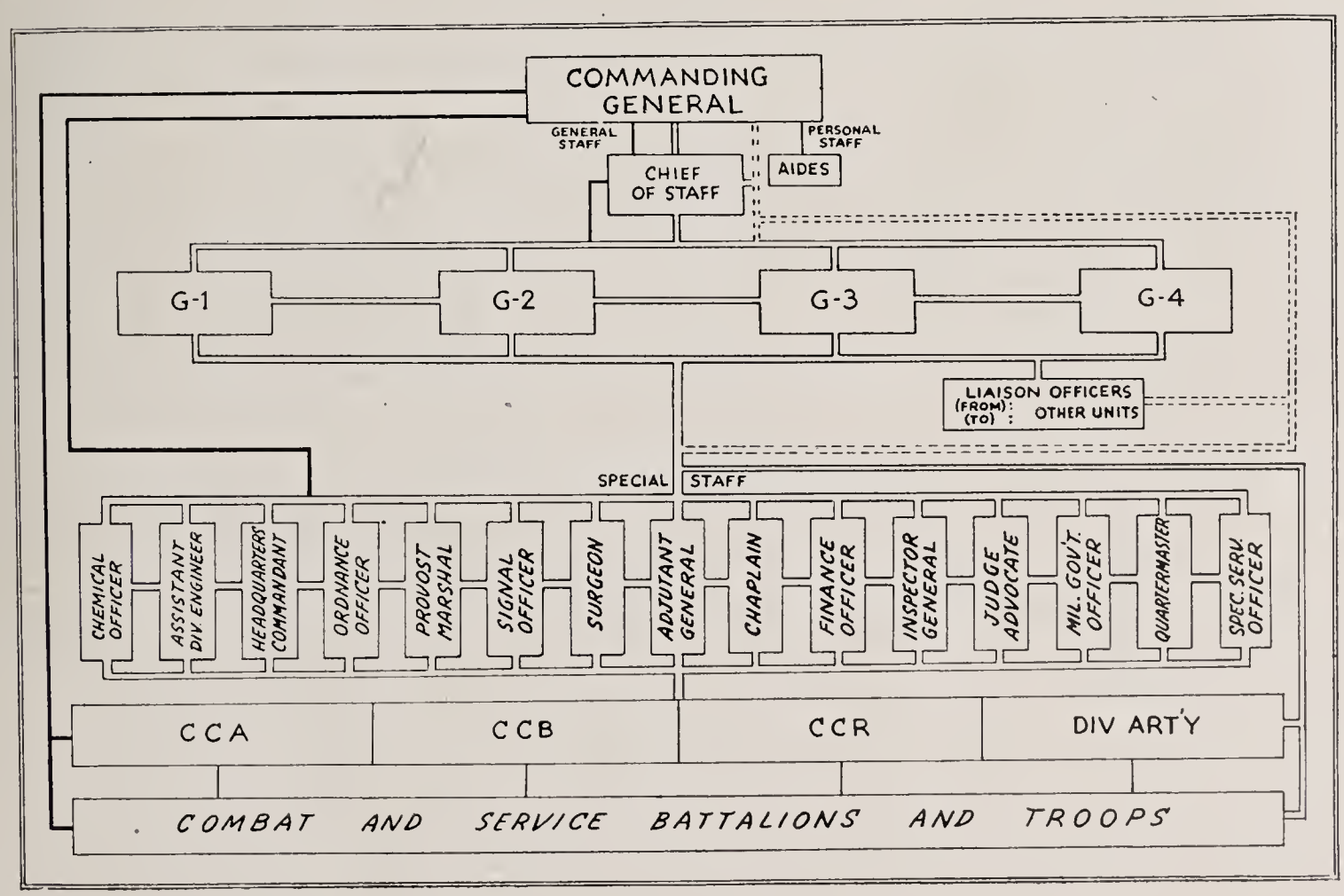
In a command as large as a division, it is impossible for the Commanding General personally to take care of the thousands of details that must be worked out in order that the division may function as a smoothly-working machine. Therefore the Division Commander has in his headquarters a group of officers known as his staff. This group is divided into the General Staff (G–1, G–2, G–3 and G–4) and the Special Staff (AG, QM, JA, etc.).

Each staff section is given certain responsibilities. The activities of the General Staff sections are explained on the next two pages. Necessarily the zones of responsibility of the various sections overlap. Likewise the work of one section often depends upon the work of other sections. It is obvious that there must be someone to coordinate all of these activities. This coordination is one of the principal duties of the Chief of Staff.

It is likewise obvious that the Division Commander cannot always remain at the division headquarters. When he is away, someone must be present who can give decisions in his name. The Chief of Staff is given this authority. Due to his close association with the Division Commander, the Chief of Staff is able to make such decisions in conformity with the Division Commander's policies.

Acting as a focal point for reports on all sorts of subjects, the Chief of Staff keeps the Division Commander informed on the many matters pertaining to the division's operations. Conversely, the Chief of Staff disseminates, through the staff sections or directly, the orders of the Division Commander to the persons who are to execute such orders.

In short, the Chief of Staff is the Division Commander's principal assistant and adviser.



Lt. Col. Francis W. Marks
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1

G-1

The Assistant Chief of Staff, G—1, is responsible for all matters pertaining to the division's personnel and policies affecting it. He obtains trained officer and enlisted replacements, directs their assignment to duties in which they are of most value to the army, and arranges the return of personnel discharged from hospitals.

The evacuation of enemy prisoners of war and liberated Allied ex-prisoners of war is under the G—1's control.

Recommendations for decorations and promotions of officers and appointment of enlisted men to be officers and warrant officers are processed by the G—1, who makes recommendations to the Commanding General for their approval or disapproval.

Leaves, furloughs and passes and recommendations for leaves and furloughs to the United States are sent to the G—1 for his approval or disapproval.

The G—1, through the Special Service Officer, supervises all special service activity within the division. This includes American Red Cross clubmobiles and "doughnut dugouts," USO and movie showings and the athletic and recreational programs.

The appointment of general courts martial and knowledge of the morale of the command, which includes knowledge of the number of men absent without leave and of the number of violations of orders serious enough to merit disciplinary action, are G—1 matters.

The application of the new redeployment regulations and point system and the formulation of policies concerning them within the division are also a G—1 responsibility.

Lt. Col. Lonsdale P. Mac Farland, Jr.
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2

G-2

The Assistant Chief of Staff, G—2, is responsible for the collection, evaluation and dissemination of all pertinent information about the enemy and terrain. His is the task of gathering and weighing reports from all sources to form a picture of the enemy's strength, his positions and his capabilities.

Vast amounts of information come from combat units through S—2's (intelligence officers), higher headquarters, adjacent units and attached intelligence teams such as IPW, MII, PI, OB and CIC. From prisoners, civilians, documents, photographs, radio, air and ground reconnaissance and from the G—2's own records come the bits of information which, when pieced together, provide a picture of the enemy.

This information, together with estimates of enemy capabilities, is submitted to the Commanding General to aid him in forming his plans for a given operation.

Reports on the enemy, his gun positions, everything which can be found out about him and the terrain which he occupies, is made known to the combat units of the division to enable them to meet and defeat the enemy with a minimum loss of men and equipment.

Counter intelligence, also, is the G—2's responsibility. He recommends and supervises measures taken to limit the enemy's information of our troops and of our intentions.

G-3

The Assistant Chief of Staff, G—3, acts as an adviser to the Division Commander on matters pertaining to operations during combat and on those of training when the division is not in combat. The G—3 has three assistants, the Assistant G—3, the Air Ground Liaison Officer (G—3 Air) and the G—3 Information-Education Officer. Operations sergeants, draftsmen, stenographers and clerks comprise the enlisted personnel of the section.

During training periods the G—3 organizes and coordinates the training of the division as prescribed by the Division Commander and higher headquarters. This involves the issuance of training directives, arranging for training areas, training aids, schools, ranges and equipment with the object of building the division personnel into a fighting team.

In time of combat the G—3 and his assistants plan and coordinate the operations of the division in accordance with the desires of the Division Commander and orders from higher headquarters. Fighter-bomber airplanes are controlled through the Air-Ground Liaison Officer in the G—3 section and dispatched to the support of the combat commands as needed. From the G—3 situation map, kept current by information from the combat commands and units, the Division Commander and the G—3 keep a constant check on the progress of the operations, making changes as dictated by the situation.

Lt. Col. F. Boynton Butler, Jr.
Assistant Chief of Staff, G—3

G-4

The Assistant Chief of Staff, G—4, takes the plan of operations as outlined by the Commanding General and estimates the requirements for supplies. In conjunction with the other members of the General Staff, he works out such details as the location of supply points, evacuation of prisoners of war, and the road net to be cleared and maintained. The G—4 must then meet with the division's supply officers, such as the Division Quartermaster and the Division Ordnance Officer, to work out the many details to make the plan effective. These are the officers who execute the plans that are made by the G—4.

Lt. Col. Harrison R. Entrekin
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4

Both the G—4 and the division supply officers must contact higher headquarters to make sure that the plans and details will fit into the supply picture on the higher level.

From the numerous reports that are received each day, a picture of the supply status of the division is formed. From this picture the required adjustments and changes must be decided upon by the G—4 and executed by the division supply officers. Reports are forwarded to higher headquarters so that they may, in turn, have a picture of the supply status of the division and make the necessary changes in their requirements and locations.

"MARRIED COMPANIES" FORM

They're an unbeatable combination — the tank-infantry teams that make up the 5th Armd. Div. "married companies." They trained together, lived together and fought together, each knows his part in the play and they form a smooth, swift team that upsets the enemy and keeps him off balance as the division smashes through.

A brand new idea in armored warfare, the "married companies," was originated by Maj. Gen. Lunsford E. Oliver, the Division Commander. Returning to the United States after having commanded Combat Command B of the 1st Armd. Div. in the invasion of North Africa, he was convinced that closer cooperation between tanks and their supporting armored infantry could be attained.

Gen. Oliver assumed command of the 5th Armd. Div. in March, 1943, but the intensive program of pre-combat training permitted no time for developing the idea. It was not until the division arrived in England, its required training completed, that Gen. Oliver could put his plan into effect.

One tank battalion and one armored infantry battalion were assigned to each combat command, but the cooperation between tanks and infantry was to go further than that. The A tank companies and A infantry companies were paired off. Likewise paired were the B and C tank and infantry companies. Within the companies each infantry platoon of five squad-halftracks was paired with a platoon of five medium tanks. Within the platoons each medium tank crew of five men was paired with its own infantry squad of 12 men. The final result of the "marriage" was a Sherman tank, a halftrack and 17 men who were to eat, sleep and fight together.

In combat the infantrymen's halftrack moves behind the tank. The Sherman's big gun knocks out heavy enemy equipment; its machine guns and crushing power overrun enemy infantry. The infantrymen, following with their additional accurate firepower, are always ready to jump from their armored 'track and move in to protect their tank from bazookas or clear the way where the terrain impedes the tank's maneuverability.

From the first day of combat the tankers and doughboys depended on one another,

THE TANK-INFANTRY TEAM

and when the situation required that tanks or infantry work alone, it was a reluctant tank crew or infantry squad that moved out without its teammates. So successful did these tank-infantry teams prove in the fighting through France that other armored divisions have adopted the "married company" plan.

In action, the tank-infantry battalions under each combat command were frequently broken down into two "task forces." The larger task force included the tank battalion headquarters with two tank companies and two infantry companies. The smaller task force consisted of the infantry battalion headquarters with one tank company and one infantry company. But still the tank-infantry squad teams formed the basis of every fighting unit.

There were other members of the team. When the tankers and doughboys ran into something big and needed help, they had only to tell it to the artillery observer riding in his tank up near the front. Over his radio flashed the call for support and within three to five minutes shells would be thundering down on the enemy from the big guns of the armored field artillery back in the column. When the last 105 mm. shell had fallen the tanks and infantry would drive in fast and mop up the remaining dazed enemy.

Not members of the 5th Armored, but no less important to the team, were the fighter-bombers that flew overhead when the Division was pushing forward, always ready to peel off and come zooming down on the enemy to bomb and strafe and soften the way for the armor. Tankers and infantrymen learned to regard the Air Corps pilots they had never met with respect and gratitude. They were members of the world's greatest fighting team — tanks, infantry, artillery and planes.

And so the spirit of teamwork spread throughout the Division's highly mobile forces. Working with each combat command were the reconnaissance troops, engineers, tank destroyers, anti-aircraft men, medics, ordnance crews, signal detachments and quartermaster truckers — each with a job to be done, each trained to do his part, and all dedicated to keeping the armor moving forward at the speed that wins battles.

HURTGEN FOREST to the ROER

The month of fighting in the Hurtgen Forest and on the approaches to the Roer River was the most bitter the men of the 5th Armd. Div. ever knew. Fighting in impossible terrain, the division's tanks and halftracks could neither maneuver nor deploy. Tied down by the terrain and thousands of mines, the tankers and infantrymen fought a hacking, yard by yard battle.

The men lived in mud and rain and freezing cold. They were constantly exposed to tremendous concentrations of enemy fire. Artillery bursting in the thick pine trees, thickly sown mines and snipers sent casualties soaring. Dead and wounded streamed back to the rear 24 hours a day in endless procession.

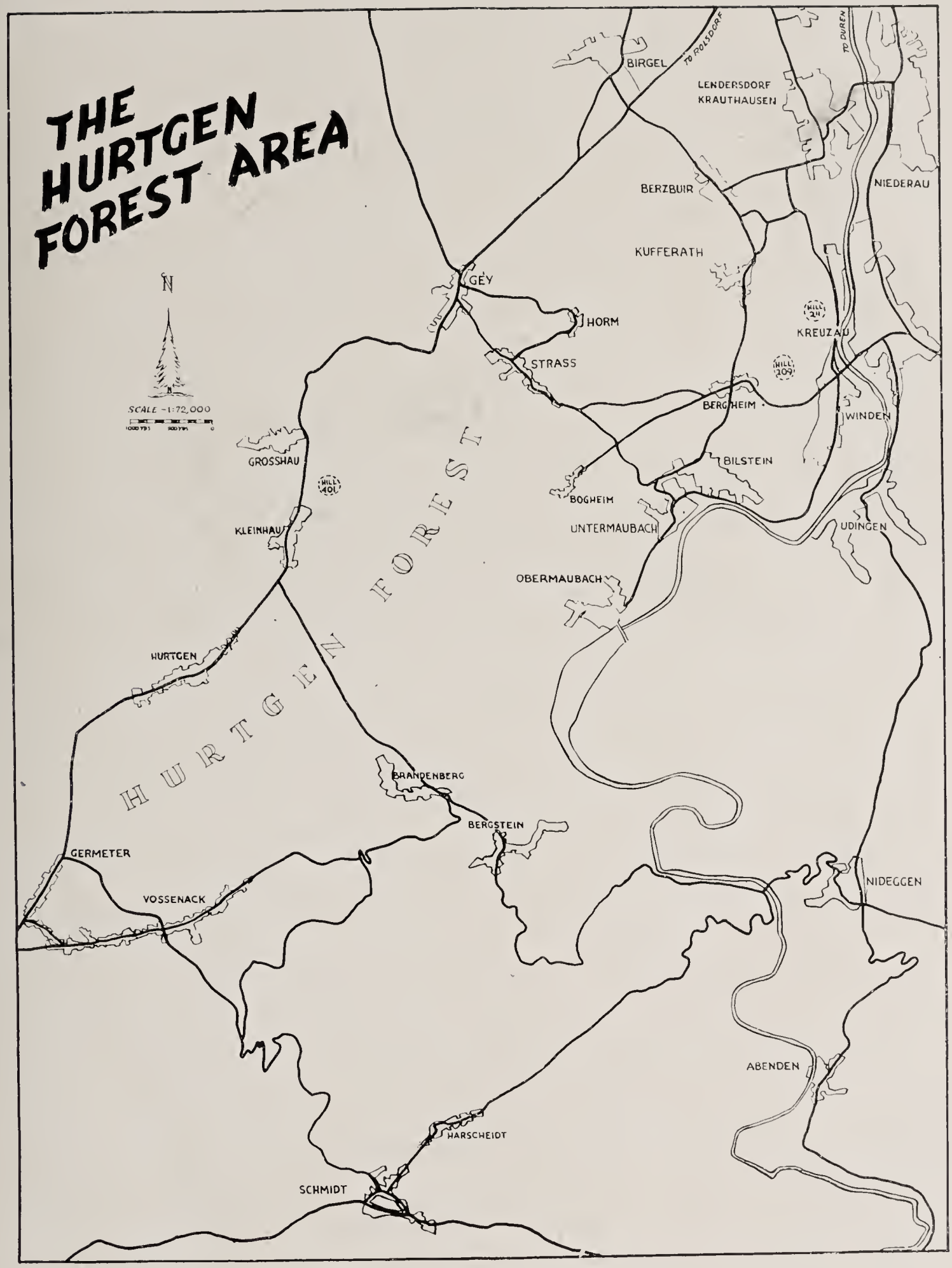
This month of combat was cruel and heartbreaking for the men, but the month's fighting snapped something in the German Army. Nowhere, ever again, did the Germans fight with the tenacious ferocity they displayed in Hurtgen and on the banks of the Roer.

CC R was the first combat command to get into the fight. Taken from under division control and operating directly under V Corps, the command fought toward Hurtgen, then took the towns of Kleinhau, Brandenberg and Bergstein.

Later in the month, a few miles to the north and toward the Roer, CC A attacked through Gey, Horm and Kufferath to the banks of the river. At the same time CC B also attacked to the Roer through the towns of Langenbroich, Bergheim and Bilstein.

Pulled out of the Hurtgen and Roer area, the division helped form the northern block to prevent the Germans from turning the army's flank during the battle of the "Bulge."

In January CC A was sent on a special mission to take the town of Eicherschied in the Siegfried Line and to clear the surrounding area. It was the division's first mission under the Ninth Army, to which the 5th Armored was assigned after serving for five months with the First Army.


THE HURTGEN FOREST AREA
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HURTGEN FOREST
BIRGEL
TO ROLSDORF
TO DUREN
LENDERSDORF
KRAUTHAUSEN
BERZBUIR
NIEDERAU
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HORM
HILL 211
KREUZAU
STRASS
HILL 209
BERGHEIM
WINDEN
GROSSHAU
BILSTEIN
HILL 401
BOGHEIM
KLEINHAU
UNTERMAUBACH
UDINGEN
OBERMAUBACH
HURTGEN
BRANDENBERG
BERGSTEIN
GERMETER
NIDEGGEN
VOSSENACK
ABENDEN
HARSCHEIDT
SCHMIDT

COMBAT COMMAND R

The night of Nov. 24, 1944, was cold, black and rainy. At 2100 that night Combat Command R started into the Hurtgen Forest. The mission was to take the German town of Hurtgen. The 95th Armored Field Artillery Bn. had gone into position five days earlier. First company to move was B Co. of the 47th Armored Infantry Bn., part of Task Force Boyer. The infantrymen moved out of Roetgen in their halftracks, leaving their married B Co. of the 10th Tank Bn. behind. Too great a concentration of armor, it was felt, would attract heavy artillery fire. The plan for the attack called for two companies, B Co. of the 47th and of the 10th, to meet on the road between Germeter and Hurtgen and jump off in married formation for the attack.

At 2400 B Co. of the 10th left Roetgen and moved toward its designated area on the road. When the infantry company arrived, the men jumped from their halftracks and sought cover in the basements, for heavy artillery was already falling around them.

Marching in a column of twos, the infantry company moved out at 0530 toward the front lines between Germeter and Hurtgen. Rain and snow slanted through the pine trees, turning the muddy roads into quagmires, making their march a step-by-step struggle. The company was led by an 8th Inf. Div. guide, one of the 22 men left of his company, and was to follow a path marked with white engineer tape. The heavy artillery and stormy weather had long since removed this marker and the company walked in the heavily mined forest without a marked passage. The Germans had sown the area heavily with schu and anti-personnel mines and almost immediately explosions and cries for "Medics!" filled the forest. At dawn the Germans began to pour in more and more artillery. Small arms fire increased.

Casualties skyrocketed, and when the tanks arrived at the jump-off point at their scheduled time, 0730, the infantry company was badly battered.

On the road between Germeter and Hurtgen, an 8th Inf. Div. light tank had struck a mine, blocking the road. A tank retriever went forward to remove it, but the retriever, too, hit a mine and was disabled. An effort was made to dynamite the light tank off the road, but this caused a large crater which made as formidable an obstacle as the disabled tank.

Despite the cratered road and the heavy casualties already suffered by the infantry company, the attack started at 0730. The tanks lurched toward Hurtgen, with Lt. Jack McAuley leading. McAuley's tank neared the crater and he called back on the radio, "I'm going to try to jump the damned thing." His tank gathered speed, roared up the soupy road, his tracks throwing a brown spray of mud to the rear. At the crater's edge the driver put on one final burst of speed, but the crater was too wide. The tank slammed into the crater's side, rolled to the left and lay half on its side, but it was in perfect defilade. McAuley could fire his 75 only by using his elevating mechanism to traverse and his traversing mechanism to elevate. From this position, the officer and his gunner, Cpl. William S. Hibler, fired round after round into enemy positions. The 95th Artillery and Lt. James M. McFadden's 47th Assault Gun Platoon continued pounding the Germans in Hurtgen. B Co. of the 10th had already lost three tank commanders to snipers who were firing from the woods on the left.

Engineers were called up to bridge the crater so the column could slip around McAuley's tank and push on to Hurtgen. Capt. Charles Perlman, commander of C Co., 22nd Engineers, came up to assist the engineers, was wounded and was evacuated. Heavy artillery and mortar fire rained on the engineers as they worked. Capt. Frank M. Pool, B Co., 10th, commander, was hit by a German burp gun while standing in his turret directing the bridging operations, but refused to be evacuated. He climbed out of his tank to help the engineers and while on the ground was wounded again, this time by mortar fire. He again refused to be evacuated, but was soon so weak from loss of blood that evacuation was necessary. Lt. Lewis R. Rollins took over the company.

By 1030, working under heavy fire, the engineers had bridged the crater. Lt. McAuley ordered Sgt. William Hurley to move his tank over the span so he could fire on the right flank and protect the column, but Hurley's tank hit a mine, again blocking the road. While carrying out these orders, Sgt. Hurley was wounded by sniper fire and was evacuated.

Then S/Sgt. Lawrence Summerfield, who was later given a battlefield commission, managed to snake his tank around the other two disabled Shermans and almost to the bend in the road which led into Hurtgen. Just as his tank pulled up to the corner, a German anti-tank gun, which had been zeroed on the corner, fired at him and missed. As the shots zoomed by Summerfield's tank, his gunner, Cpl. Benny R. Majka, knocked out the German gun with one round from his 75. Just then another German gun opened fire on Summerfield's tank, knocking it out.

By now it was 1400. P—47's came over to bomb and strafe enemy positions in Hurtgen.

At this time Capt. Richard Lewis' B Co., 47th, had only 80 men left out of 225. Mines, snipers and artillery had almost wiped out the company. The Anti-Tank Platoon was brought up to serve as litter bearers and emergency aid men, for although the medics worked fast, they found it impossible to care for all the rapidly mounting casualties.

The Anti-Tank Platoon worked unceasingly, treating and evacuating the wounded men. Sgt. Lyndall Mailes and Pfc. Charles M. Drake made trip after trip over the heavily mined ground to evacuate wounded men.

Pfc. Leonard Tanis, B Co., 47th, noticed that the snipers and artillery seemed to have a working agreement. The crack of a sniper's rifle was frequently followed by an artillery concentration. Wriggling forward to a position from which he could observe, Tanis used his M—1 to kill a sniper who was also directing artillery.

By now Capt. Leo R. Marcikowski's C Co., 47th, had been brought up and was

Attack to Kleinhau

trying to flank through the woods to the left of the road. The mines and artillery quickly took heavy toll and in 15 minutes 50 C Co. men lay wounded on the ground. Their progress was also slowed by Germans firing American machine guns from positions that were supposed to be in American hands. Both infantry companies were by now almost exhausted, even before they had come into close contact with the enemy. The Germans had booby-trapped every ditch and foxhole, and when the men flopped into a hole to avoid the artillery they were blown up by these mines.

It was impossible to employ the tanks or use the heavy infantry weapons. It was a hopeless job to continue the attack. Late that night Col. Anderson told Col. Boyer to pull his task force out.

Meanwhile, Task Force Hamberg, the married A and C Cos., had been living in the mud and muck just north of Germeter. They stayed there for the next three days under heavy shelling while the 8th Infantry, after paying a terrible price, finally took Hurtgen. On the morning of Nov. 29 Task Force Hamberg moved through the 8th Inf. Div. to attack Kleinhau. The married C Cos. led the attack, moving up the road between Hurtgen and Kleinhau.

Lt. Robert Leas' 1st Platoon of C Co. tanks swung to the left off the road to provide flank protection and four tanks were immediately stuck in the deep, thick mud. The 2nd Tank Platoon, under Lt. T. A. Maguire, went straight up the road toward Kleinhau, followed by Lt. George Kleinsteiber's 3rd Platoon. A 2nd Platoon tank section under S/Sgt. Edwin Gordon was detached and also sent to the left flank. While he was in an exposed position under heavy fire, Gordon was called on the radio and told he could pull out if fire became too heavy. He preferred to stick at his job. He was later shot by a sniper and was evacuated.

By 1000 at least one platoon of tanks had bulled its way into Kleinhau. The 95th Artillery continued to pound the Germans during the attack, with Lt. Howard K. Kettlehut going far forward to observe and direct the fire.

At the time the married C Cso. were fighting their way into Kleinhau, the married A Cos. were following them up the road and through the fields to the left of the road.

Lt. William Drennen's platoon led the A Co. attack. It swung to the left off the road and around C Co.'s tanks mired in the mud. Capt. Arthur N. Whitley, A Co. commander, was up with the leading tank platoon. Artillery rained on and around the tanks, for the Germans had direct observation and plastered the area with all their artillery to stop the attack.

Drennen continued to work to the left toward Kleinhau and Lt. Joseph Cardone's platoon ploughed straight for Kleinhau. Cardone arrived in Kleinhau with three of his five tanks. One was knocked out by direct fire and the other received a direct hit in the turret with a German mortar. By 1430 Capt. Whitley's company was in Kleinhau in support of C Co.

Again the two supporting infantry companies were fighting a losing battle with mines, artillery and snipers, trying to keep pace with the tanks.

Capt. Joe M. Beisenstein's A Co., 47th, pushed toward Kleinhau, working to the left of the Hurtgen—Kleinhau road. Capt. Beisenstein was twice wounded and twice refused evacuation. He continued to lead his company until he was killed by a German artillery shell during the attack.

By early afternoon both infantry companies had broken through to Kleinhau and helped the tanks outpost the town.

At 1800 that night Capt. Francis J. Baum was mortally wounded by a direct artillery hit in his tank. Capt. Baum had gotten out of his tank to check each of his platoons' positions, and had just climbed back into his turret when the artillery shell landed on his tank. He died a short time later in the battalion aid station.

That night, Nov. 29, the 8th Inf. Div. moved into Kleinhau to relieve the two heavily hit 47th Inf. companies. The tanks stayed in the town until the next afternoon, and then pulled out of Kleinhau into a woods west of the town. Artillery and mortars continued to fall steadily.

During all of this action the 95th Artillery continued to blast German positions with counter-battery and support fire.

Task Force Hamberg stayed in the woods west of Kleinhau until it received orders on Dec. 1 to take the town of Brandenberg, three miles south of Kleinhau. It was the start of another bitter, cruel fight against mines, artillery and the ever-present German snipers.

At 0700 Dec. 2, Col. Hamberg's forces jumped off, A Cos. leading, Lt. Kenneth Wagner's 2nd Platoon in front. The platoon swung to the right of the road to avoid mines, but almost immediately Wagner's tank struck a mine and was put of action. Wagner ordered the crew to abandon the tank, and then walked back to the platoon behind him to tell them about the minefield. Lt. Wagner, T/5 Harry Spletzer, his driver, and Cpl. Marty Sceithauer were crouching behind Lt. Cardone's tank to avoid a sudden artillery barrage when the driver, unaware that anyone was behind the tank, backed up, injuring the three men.

Mines Slow Advance

Stopped cold by the mines, the tankers and infantrymen waited for the engineers to come up and clear the field. While waiting for the engineers to arrive, the A Co., 47th, halftracks parked in a field less than 50 yards away from a German anti-tank gun, but after the German crew had looked over the situation, they decided to give up rather than fight. They came out to surrender to Capt. Daniel Wersma.

That afternoon Capt. Samuel Siegler sent two of his D Co. light tanks to investigate enemy movement to the right of the road. Sgt. Chester F. Gorzynski and Sgt. Frank C. Wach took their tanks over. As Gorzynski approached a house in the area, he fired a tentative machine gun burst and almost immediately a German officer and 20 men

came out, all carrying white cloths over their heads. Quickly another group of 20 appeared from the nearby woods, and then, as if on signal, Germans came pouring out of the woods and buildings from all sides. In 30 minutes the two light tanks had taken 175 prisoners.

The 1st Platoon of C Co., 22nd Engineers, arrived and worked throughout the night removing mines from the extensive field. S/Sgt. Paul Bragg and his three squad leaders, Sgt. Charles Nader, Sgt. Leslie Hager and Sgt. William Kestner, found the pattern for the field and they and their men went to work with ropes, pulling out the mines. It was a nervous, touchy job. The men never knew when a mine was booby-trapped and they worked hour after hour in the complete blackness clearing the field. German artillery boomed and pounded in the pine trees around them. By morning more than 400 mines had been removed. The engineers had done all they could to clear the way.

While the engineers were pulling out mines, an A Co. outpost guarded the engineers from infiltrating Germans. S/Sgt. Guido Borella, member of the outpost, had just been relieved from guard and had gone into a dugout when he heard the new guards call for help. Scrambling out of his dugout in the pitch black, he discovered that the Germans had infiltrated the outpost line in strength. A damaged tank which had hit a mine stood nearby. Borella climbed on to utilize the tank guns. He reached for the .50 caliber machine gun and found that the careful crew had removed the backplate to prevent the Germans from using it. Clambering down into the tank, he tried to fire the .30 caliber machine gun. Again the backplate was missing. Borella had never fired a 75 gun before, but he rammed a shell home in the chamber, pressed the trigger and nothing happened — the percussion mechanism had been removed.

Realizing the outpost was badly outnumbered, Borella and three other men started to the rear for help. Going to the company command post, he found Lt. Donald Hughes and told his story. By now it was almost daylight and Capt. Whitley had come to the infantry command post to say the attack was shoving off. The Anti-Tank Platoon followed closely to rescue the outnumbered outpost. When they arrived, they found five men had been carried away as prisoners and three lay wounded on the ground. Pfc. Richard Baer had escaped capture by feigning death after he had been knocked unconscious by a German grenade. He lay very still in the mud as the Germans milled around him, taking the prisoners and shooting those who tried to escape.

The attack on Brandenberg had jumbed off at 0700 with C Co. of the 10th leading. Lt. Maguire rode the lead tank. He had gone only a few hundred yards toward Brandenberg when his tank hit a concealed mine. He jerked out his command radio, stopped Sgt. Rex Sterling's tank, second in the column, shoved his radio in and pushed on toward Brandenberg.

The Brandenberg assault was carefully planned. All firepower was used and Col. Hamberg later said it was one of the most perfectly timed attacks he had ever seen. As the C Co. tanks roared into town, shooting as they rolled, A Co. tanks and D Co. light tanks provided supporting fire. C Co. infantry closely followed the tanks and drove into the town to mop up. Tanks pulled up to buildings, blasted doors and windows with tank guns. Infantry boiled down into basements, digging out the Germans with hand grenades and small arms. By 1200 the town had been cleared and 75 prisoners had been taken. Casualties had again been high, and the wounded were evacuated in halftracks.

During the attack on Brandenberg, Lt. Kleinsteiber's 3rd Platoon of tanks had roared completely through the town and into the next town of Bergstein before he realized he had gone too far. The Germans were taken completely by surprise and not a shot was fired at him. Kleinsteiber hurriedly withdrew when he realized his mistake.

That night, Dec. 3, the C Cos. consolidated positions in Brandenberg. The married C Cos. were now commanded by Lt. Maguire and Lt. James Painter.

All day on Dec. 4 the companies stayed in Brandenberg under heavy artillery fire. German planes came in to strafe and drop butterfly bombs. The companies knocked down two of the planes.

The "Rubble Pile"

On the same day, Task Force Boyer, which had been in the Germeter area, was called on to help the 8th Infantry clear the "rubble pile," a name applied to the eastern tip of Vossenack. It was nothing more than a jumble of blown-down buildings, but the Germans had established a strong point there and already a battalion of the 8th Division infantry had worn itself out trying to clear the area.

The married B Cos. 2nd Platoons led the assault. Lt. Oliver Goldman and his infantrymen rode the rear decks of the tanks to avoid the heavy anti-personnel minefields. Tank mines stopped the tanks short of the rubble pile, and the infantry piled off and started toward the strong point. Lt. Goldman sent S/Sgt. Steven O'Connel to flank the rubble pile to the left. The remainder of the platoon, five men and Lt. Goldman, started toward the German positions.

Lt. McAuley brought his tanks into position to work over a German machine gun nest on the right flank. Lt. Goldman was called back to the battalion command post of the 8th Infantry. A colonel in command of the operation told him the rubble pile had to be taken by the next morning.

The area leading to the rubble pile was so heavily mined that the duck feet on the tanks pulled mines out of the ground as they moved. The tanks were forced to stop because of the mines. It was decided to attack the first thing in the morning.

The Goldman–McAuley married platoons assaulted the rubble pile at 0930 on the morning of Dec. 5, captured it and found it contained strong dugouts, a quantity of radio equipment and American guns. The married platoon then attacked the next objective, a strongly fortified German fire trench to the south of the rubble pile. With the tanks firing in support, the infantrymen drove into the fire trenches, reported them clear, and the assault force pulled back into Vossenack, its mission completed. Task Force Boyer continued on to Germeter, then followed Task Force Hamberg, that by now was readying an attack on Bergstein.

Before dawn on Dec. 5, Col. Hamberg sent a patrol from the 1st and 2nd Platoons of Lt. George W. Basquez's C Troop, 85th Recon, almost to the edge of Bergstein to check the road for mines and to locate enemy strong points. The 12-man patrol led by Lt. Max Eastman started at 0300, hugging the ditches, trying to avoid the mines and booby trap wires the Germans had laid. Sgt. Raymond Rupelli and Sgt. David Matha helped Lt. Eastman direct the patrol. Working silently, in complete darkness, sometimes crawling on all fours, the patrol reached the edge of Bergstein and heard enemy troops in the town. They found no mines or barbed wire entanglements on the road, and crawled slowly back to the command post in Brandengberg to make their report.

Col. Anderson's entire command was used for the assault on Bergstein. The order of attack was to be the married C Cos., A Cos., then B Cos.

The attack started with the infantry riding into the town on the rear decks of the tanks. The Germans had been waiting for the attack and laid such a tremendous barrage that the infantrymen were forced to leave the tanks and seek what cover they could find on the ground. Leading his company into Bergstein, Lt. Maguire was killed by a direct artillery hit on his tank. Lt. Painter was wounded and evacuated. Lt. Roy Hanf, the only remaining officer in C Co., 47th, took charge of the company. The married C Cos. ploughed into Bergstein, firing with every gun they had, then veered to the left edge of town.

The two platoon sergeants of the leading C Co. platoons were killed in the attack and their platoons were disorganized. Without hesitation Pfc. Bernard Gallagher and Cpl. David Lacoutere took over the platoons and continued to lead the attack. The pair were later promoted to staff sergeant and technical sergeant respectively.

The married A Cos. followed in the second assault wave. On the way in, a German 75 mm. anti-tank gun with a round in the chamber, ready to fire, was captured after heavy tank fire drove the crew away. As the A Co. infantry moved in to clean up the

German crew, an enemy officer rose out of his foxhole and raised his gun to fire on the advancing infantrymen. Pfc. Lester Aurand shot him squarely in the forehead before he could aim his gun.

Following A Co., the third assault wave of married B Cos. roared into Bergstein, Lt. George E. Flower's platoon leading. As they neared the town, Flower's platoon swung to the right to cover Lt. Cullin's platoon as it smashed into town. Sgt. Dominic Bernaco knocked out a German Mark IV tank which was trying to flee south out of Bergstein.

Lt. Goldman's C Co., 47th, platoon assaulted the first building in the town and dragged out 25 SS infantrymen found cringing in the basement. Goldman was checking the house for further Germans when an armor-piercing projectile whammed through the wall a few yards from where he was standing and went completely through the building. Then a second and a third projectile zoomed through the wall. All missed him. Sgt. Abe Kurnasky's B Co., 10th, tank pulled up to knock out the German gun, but his tank was knocked out and he was killed.

Into the town with the three married companies roared two platoons of C Co., 628th Tank Destroyers, commanded by Capt. Robert C. Jones, and Lt. Basquez's C Troop, 85th Recon.

CC R quickly outposted the town and waited for the inevitable counterattack. It came the next morning, and was the strongest the Germans had yet launched. During the night the men in Bergstein could hear the Germans warming up their tank motors outside the town and making other preparations to attack.

Counterattack

At 0530 the enemy laid down a tremendous artillery barrage and the attacking Germans came in almost under their own barrage. At least 500 German infantrymen swarmed into the town to hack away at the tired combat command.

The 628th Tank Destroyer men were ready for the German armor when it appeared. Sgt. Woodrow W. Woods' long 90 mm. gun picked off a Mark VI and a Mark V at 1000 yards, Sgt. Frank R. Balough accounted for two enemy tanks, a Mark V and a Mark IV, at 1200 yards, and Sgt. Charles A. Leo blasted one Mark IV only 175 yards from his tank destroyer.

The main weight of the attack was thrown on the married B Cos. which occupied the two southern prongs of the town. The Germans stumbled forward, stepping on their own dead and wounded to force the attack. T/5 Martin Johnson fired 15 clips from his smoking tommy gun to drive off the Germans in his section of town. S/Sgt. Jack Peterson fired his-.50 caliber machine gun continuously until the attack subsided. By 1030, after more than four hours of constant siege, the attack was broken.

Virtually all of the men of CC R were in a state of shock. Their nerves were shot, their physical energy had long since disappeared. They crouched dazedly in their foxholes and basements, loading their guns and waiting for the Germans to come back. They knew they could never hold another counterattack like the last one. There simply wasn't enough men left. Every hour cost them more casualties, and the counterattack had taken a heavy toll.

In the afternoon another counterattack came, but by this time the Germans were losing heart. The attack was small and was soon beaten back. More attacks were launched on the town, but the Germans never again seriously threatened. The men learned later why the Germans had attacked the town so furiously. The German High Command had offered the Knight's Cross of the German Iron Cross to any unit that retook Bergstein. But the German High Command never had to pay off.

At 0400 on the morning of Dec. 9 the weary, battered men were relieved in Bergstein and started to leave the town. The command had eight effective tanks left out of 58 which they started. Seventy infantrymen were available for full duty of an original strength of more than 750. It had been a costly fight.

COMBAT COMMAND A

The 46th Armored Infantry Bn. was attached to Combat Team 22 of the 4th Inf. Div. Nov. 29 and assembled in the dark and forboding Hurtgen Forest, one mile west of Kleinhau. That night Lt. Col. William H. Burton, Jr., visited the commanding officer of the 22nd Combat Team. The mission, he was told, was to attack from a line running north and south across Hill 401 and to gain the far edge of the woods beyond Kleinhau. CC A was then to attack to take Strass.

The combat command, attached to the 4th Inf. Div. on Nov. 30, moved to the vicinity of Zweifal. Co. A, 22nd Engineers, joined the engineers of the 4th Infantry to help keep open the necessary supply lines to the rear, and the 47th Armored Field Artillery went into position west of Kleinhau where bodies of dead Germans still lay in the woods about the artillery positions.

Before dawn on Nov. 30, Major Jack B. Day contacted the infantry unit on the left. Major Lionel R. Fuller and Major Richard W. McKenna, then a captain, set out to contact the unit reported to be holding the line of departure at Hill 401 and Kleinhau. Artillery and mortar fire was falling in the open ground, but they made their way through the darkness from shell hole to shell hole. The enemy held Hill 401, they discovered, and both friendly and hostile troops were in Kleinhau. Fuller and McKenna found the commanding officer of the American troops in the town and explained the proposed action of the 46th.

Meanwhile, Col. Burton had issued a partial attack order and moved out with a small party to reconnoiter to his line of departure. His radio failed. While he was out of communication with his companies, A and C Cos. emerged from the woods, moving up to the line of departure in perfect approach march formation. Immediately heavy and continuous artillery and mortar fire and small arms and machine gun fire from Hill 401 and Kleinhau raked the doughboys. A and C Cos. deployed, but were pinned down by the intense and unexpected fire. A complete change of plans was necessary, Col. Burton realized. Making his way across the fireswept open ground to the lead elements, Col. Burton ran and crawled to each commander to issue his revised orders for the assault on Hill 401 and Kleinhau. He then helped lead C Co. up the steep slopes of Hill 401 in a successful but bloody assault. Col. Burton later received the Distinguished Service Cross for this action.

On 401 they captured a pillbox, 50 prisoners and six machine guns. During the assault artillery and mortar barrages pounded the 46th infantrymen and heavy machine gun fire poured in from commanding positions on top of the hill. When C Co. was within 200 yards of the hilltop, a self-propelled gun moved out of the woods 200 yards to the left front and opened fire with such speed and accuracy that C Co. was stopped and the success of the entire operation was jeopardized.

T/Sgt. Floyd M. Spray, who was leading his platoon of Co. C, quickly realized that his men could not long survive if they remained under the heavy artillery and mortar barrages. He seized a rocket launcher and, with almost no cover, made his way along the entire front of his platoon to a position opposite the enemy gun. Within 100 yards of the gun he opened fire with his rocket launcher. He forced the enemy gun to withdraw and permitted Co. C to continue the assault. Sgt. Spray was mortally wounded while returning to his platoon.

Co. A, on the right, advanced abreast of C Co. across 900 yards of open ground to take Kleinhau and clear the town of snipers. B Co., although the reserve company, suffered its share of casualties from the artillery and mortar fire. At 1300, part of the company was pinned down by a concealed machine gun 300 yards to the front. S/Sgt. Robert M. Henley, a squad leader from the 3rd Platoon, climbed a tree under sniper fire, located the gun, then wriggled forward and assaulted the enemy position with

his tommy gun. He killed or wounded the entire crew and permitted his platoon to advance again.

After the capture of Hill 401 and Kleinhau, Co. C continued to attack east and, at 1600, reached the originally assigned line of departure. B Co. passed through A and continued the attack east from Kleinhau. In the open ground beyond the town, B Co. was again stopped by a concealed machine gun, this time 45 yards to the right front. Pfc. Albert H. Harrington attempted to crawl up on the enemy and knock out this gun. In so doing he was killed by an enemy sniper, but his heroic act enabled his company to locate and destroy the enemy position.

A short time later the company was again held up by a machine gun. Lt. Brady O. Kelley crawled up a firebreak for almost 200 yards, assaulted the enemy with only his carbine, and killed the entire crew. At 1700, Pfc. William G. Lee, a scout moving to the right of B Co., charged an enemy wire crew of four and killed or wounded them.

The advance of B and C Cos. continued through the heavy forest beyond Kleinhau under heavy and continuous artillery and mortar fire and sudden, intense machine gun and sniper fire from the concealed enemy. By 2200, they had penetrated 1200 yards into the woods. Co. A came up and the battalion set up defensive positions for the night. Then they began the difficult task of evacuating the wounded, for all three companies had suffered approximately 30 per cent casualties in the day's fighting.

Artillery fire continued throughout the night as the litter parties made their tedious, dangerous way back through the woods to Kleinhau. From Kleinhau, T/5 Harry Rockman, who had volunteered to drive his ambulance to this forward point, carried the wounded back over the dark, shell-torn road to the hospital.

The medics never quit working in Hurtgen Forest. Stories of their bravery were told and retold long after other details of the fight had been forgotten. High on the doughboys' list of heroes is T/5 John A. Dunleavy, 46th medical aid man attached to the 1st Platoon, Co.C. He knew no fear except the fear of leaving a wounded man unattended. Ignoring fire that pinned all others to their foxholes, he went from man to man, treating and evacuating casualties throughout the fight, saving an inestimable number of lives.

Casualties Heavy

The battalion spent the night in foxholes under continuous fire and jumped off at 0900 the next morning. In the thick woods visibility was limited to five yards. Contact was made with the enemy immediately. Casualties were again heavy, but there was no stopping the 46th's attack.

At 1100 the 1st Platoon of Co. C, moving as skirmishers through a dense growth of short pines, was halted by an enemy machine gun firing 150 yards to the front. S/Sgt. Peter J. Parrow, acting platoon leader, crawled to within 20 yards of the gun and destroyed the crew with hand grenades. He saw another machine gun firing at his men and set out to destroy it. He had gone half the distance when he was mortally wounded by a third gun. His efforts permitted his men to locate the guns and destroy them with mortar fire.

By noon Co. C had advanced 500 yards when the 1st Platoon was again pinned down by a machine gun. This time S/Sgt. Robert B. Dixon crawled forward and destroyed the enemy crew with a hand grenade. As Dixon was returning to the company the enemy laid down a heavy mortar barrage and he was fatally wounded.

At the same time a hostile 75 mm. self-propelled gun opened fire 150 yards from C Co. and the battalion command post. Capt. Robert T. Bland, then acting S-3 of the battalion and one of the fiercest fighters in the division, immediately went forward under this direct fire to the lead company, organized a group of volunteer bazooka teams and moved against the enemy gun. He led his men to a position which, though fully exposed, permitted effective fire against the target. He directed the fire until a shell burst in the center of the group, killing three and wounding the remainder. Capt. Bland, himself, lost his right leg during the attack.

Casualties had been so heavy that Col. Burton sent for the anti-tank platoons to come forward as replacement riflemen. While bringing up the Anti-Tank Platoon of

B Co., Lt. James H. Foster was forced to cross an open field under heavy artillery fire. Running across the field, he spotted a large foxhole and jumped in to avoid the shell-fire. The hole was near an enemy machine gun nest. Five Germans, members of the gun crew, were in the hole, their heads bent down to avoid the artillery fire. Lt. Foster, firing his M-I rifle like a tommy gun, killed all of them.

At 1200 the 46th was ordered to withdraw to the positions of the night before and tie in a defense with the 2nd Bn. of the 22nd Inf., 800 yards further to the rear and 500 yards to the left. The enemy held commanding ground to the right front from which he was directing heavy, accurate mortar and artillery fire. Lt. Edward J. Egan and his assistant, T/4 Wayne Manion, the only remaining forward observer party from the 47th Artillery, stayed forward with the skeleton force covering the withdrawal. Covered by 47th Artillery fire, the infantry moved reluctantly back, carrying their wounded over the blood-soaked ground they had won at such cost during the morning. The withdrawal was completed by 1500. An hour later a company of German infantry counterattacked, supported by increased mortar and artillery fire. The attack was broken by 46th riflemen and machine gunners.

Supplied During Dark

After dark the 46th began to resupply and evacuate its wounded. Artillery and mortar shells continued to fall and during the night the enemy sent out patrols. German burp guns fired wildly in unsuccessful attempts to get the 46th outposts to reveal their positions.

An attack was ordered at 1000 on Dec. 2, this time to be supported by B Co. of the 34th Tank Bn. At dawn, artillery and mortar fire increased and casualties mounted steadily. At 1100 the supporting tanks had not made their appearance. The S–3 requested permission to attack unsupported to seize the high ground to the right front. From that point the enemy was directing deadly fire – the heaviest ever experienced by the battalion. To stay in position meant the death of every man.

But plans had been changed, and the 46th was withdrawn to a new position. Here the enemy fire was so accurate and intense that the 46th moved back into Kleinhau, held by the 8th Inf. Div. The wounded were left behind in sheltered positions. T/5 Sigmund Rachwal and Pfc. Dom C. Ansani of the Medical Detachment remained to care for them. The battalion moved back into the woods west of Kleinhau shortly after dark.

At 2200 Col. Burton, Capt. John J. McCafferty, Lt. Arthur Paul, T/4 Henry A. Wicka and Pfc. George Brodsky went back to see that all the wounded had been evacuated. Col. Burton contacted two command posts in Kleinhau and was assured at each that the area had been searched and that there were no men left beyond the outpost line. Still not convinced, he continued through scattered artillery fire to a pillbox 500 yards beyond the outpost line. The party approached the pillbox and, while the other members of the patrol covered the immediate vicinity, Col. Burton kicked open the door and demanded:

"Who's there?"

Pfc. Ansani answered from within. Inside the pillbox Col. Burton found Ansani and Rachwal with seven wounded men and 10 members of the 8th Inf. Div. Pfc. Brodsky returned to Kleinhau for litter bearers and T/4 Wicka went to the nearest outpost for water. Lt. Paul, Wicka and Brodsky remained in the pillbox to supervise the evacuation of the wounded while Col. Burton and Capt. McCafferty returned to Kleinhau to arrange for ambulances. All the wounded were evacuated by 0400 the next morning.

The entire action around Kleinhau was the most severe imaginable. The 46th had suffered almost 40 per cent casualties, but came out of the battle a tattered but confident outfit. When all went wrong, the officers and men of the battalion rose to the occasion and displayed the utmost tenacity and coolness. In a critical situation there was always a man or group of men who volunteered to deal with it.

Although the 46th had been detached from the 5th Armored for the battle, it was not alone in its fight. The 47th Artillery gave its best efforts in support. Gen. Regnier

kept close supervision over the action through the sleepless nights and days. CC A's engineers worked like beavers to keep open the hopelessly inadequate supply lines behind Kleinhau.

From Dec. 3 to 5 the 46th Inf., with B Co. of the 34th and A Co. of the 22nd Engineers, remained in the woods west of Kleinhau, prepared to resist a possible counterattack. Enemy air was active, and the 47th Artillery shot down five German planes. On Dec. 5 this force was moved into CC A's area near Zweifal and, on Dec. 8, the entire command moved to Hahn.

Gey-Kufferath

The attack plan called for CC A to thrust east from Gey to take Kufferath and Hills 209 and 211, overlooking Winden and the Roer River. This attack was to be made in conjunction with CC B on the right and was to be launched after the 83rd Inf. Div. had taken Gey and Strass.

Dec. 11, CC A moved into an assembly area on the eastern edge of the Hurtgen Forest immediately west of Grosshau. But Gey and Strass had not yet been captured, and the attack scheduled for the next day had to be postponed. The 46th Inf. returned to Hahn.

Capt. Thomas Grose's A Co. of the 22nd Engineers worked under artillery and small arms fire Dec. 11 and 12 to improve and clear the important Grosshau-Gey road.

Gey was still in enemy hands Dec. 13 and the command remained in position under sporadic artillery fire, waiting for the order to attack. Engineers continued their work on the road, using two crabs. At the command post a peep from D Co. of the 34th hit another mine. Lt. Lionel B. Scott, Lt. Russell Crockett and their driver were wounded as pieces of the peep were blown 40 feet into the air. A field desk in the peep was blown still higher and fell on a CP tent in which Major William G. Reynolds and members of his staff were assembled.

Then orders came for the attack. On the morning of Dec. 14 the 34th Headquarters with married A and B Cos., commanded by Lt. Col. William L. Cabaniss, moved up the road to Gey. The task force was exposed to enemy observation and fire until the 47th Artillery laid down a smoke screen east of the road. The tanks and infantry slipped through to Gey.

Capt. Raymond W. Weeks, commanding B Co. of the 34th, went forward with the 2nd Platoon. A crab cleared a path ahead through the minefields to within 100 yards of Horm when it was disabled by a mine. The A Co. engineers cleared out the remaining mines.

The 2nd Platoon of B Co. tanks, under Lt. Marvin W. Orgill, deployed to the north of the road and in front of Horm, while the accompanying infantry remained on the road in their halftracks. Moving through heavy artillery fire, the 2nd Platoon was almost in the town when hostile infantry, bazooka and anti-tank fire opened up. Lt. Orgill's platoon let loose an intense assault fire and prisoners began to stream out of the town.

Lt. Ernest F. Schmidt moved his 3rd Platoon to engage anti-tank guns on the southwest edge of Horm. His own tank knocked out two 75 mm. self-propelled guns at close range, then hit a mine. Sgt. Joseph E. Nemechek moved his tank to an exposed position toward the south of town and knocked out three troublesome self-propelled guns at a range of 1000 yards.

The entire 3rd Platoon fought a nip and tuck battle with the many enemy anti-tank guns in and around the village. A 150 mm. self-propelled gun sighted in the town was destroyed by Sgt. Felix A. Diersing's tank. Sgt. Wilmer Doty's tank was hit on the right side by a 75 mm. self-propelled gun and exploded, throwing him clear. He returned to his burning tank, pulled out his gunner, Cpl. Charles Fuller, then went back to rescue his driver. Two more rounds smashed into the tank, the driver was killed, and Sgt. Doty was seriously wounded.

Many Prisoners

During the action prisoners continued to stream out of the town. Two squads of infantry from the 83rd Division approached Capt. Weeks and asked if they could be of assistance. They were put to work handling the prisoners.

The B Cos. reassembled beyond Horm, leaving the town for the A Cos. to mop up. Tanks fired on the commanding hill to the northeast in order to deny the enemy that observation point, but artillery continued to fall as the B Cos. took on more ammunition.

The B Cos. soon took off again toward Kufferath, the 2nd Platoon leading. The tanks and infantry fought forward under heavy artillery fire to within 400 yards of the objective, Kufferath. Suddenly a battery of hidden anti-tank guns opened up from the right flank. Capt. Weeks' tank was knocked out. He jumped out, ran to another tank, and radioed orders for the 3rd Platoon to move up even with the 2nd Platoon. Lt. Orgill swung his platoon to face the enemy guns and took them under fire. His tank was hit, and he was blown unconscious from the turret. Sgt. Diersing took command and directed the fire until Lt. Orgill regained consciousness and returned to the action. In this fierce duel with anti-tank guns firing from positions near Bergheim, B Co. lost five tanks. It had only three tanks and one tank-dozer when it was ordered into defiladed positions in front of Kufferath.

T/4 Charles H. Munn, whose tank had been knocked out, was making his way to the rallying point when he found Sgt. Franklin Dow lying seriously wounded beside his destroyed tank. Munn picked up his comrade and carried him, under artillery fire, two miles to the aid station in Gey. Pfc. Jack Sweed helped a badly burned comrade to the aid station. In Horm Sweed was wounded by an artillery concentration, but found an abandoned peep and evacuated casualties from Horm for several hours before he would accept treatment for himself.

The B Cos. waited in their defiladed positions while Capt. Richard Biedermann moved up with A Co. of the 34th, followed by A Co. of the 46th. A squadron of P—47's came in and clobbered Kufferath, Bergheim and the woods in between. By nightfall Capt. Biedermann's forces were around Kufferath on three sides.

Soft ground and incoming artillery made the work of resupply and evacuation of wounded extremely difficult. Pvt. Charles E. Gariepy, Pvt. William E. Sayre, Pfc. Benjamin Litwak and Pvt. George T. Puskar had worked all afternoon evacuating the wounded by litter. During the night Sgt. George E. Baker of A Co., 34th, joined them to carry out the wounded on the deck of his tank. Supplies were brought in by light tanks towing trailers.

Early the next morning B Co. of the 46th jumped off to take Hills 209 and 211. Two tanks had been put back into operation during the night, and Capt. Weeks was able to support the attack with six tanks. The tanks received anti-tank fire from Bergheim. Tank destroyers, assault guns and mortars blasted the town while the B Co. tanks supported the infantry attack by firing 75 mm. cannister shells against the enemy on top of the hills. Two anti-tank guns in the woods to the right knocked out three tanks, but Sgt. William Kundman, A Co., 34th, pounded them with his 76 mm. tank gun, destroyed one and forced the other to withdraw. Four tanks were lost, Lt. Orgill's among them, but the hills were taken.

Cpl. Patsy Letterie and Pfc. Chester S. Bortowski, having left their knocked out tanks, observed another tank burst into flames and a crew member fall unconscious and wounded on the rear deck. Under artillery fire they moved this man to a place of safety and administered first aid.

Supply Routes Shelled

B Co. of the infantry dug in on the objective and began to think about resupply. Between them and the supply point was over a mile of open ground pounded by continuous artillery and mortar concentrations. Casualties had been so heavy that carrying parties could not be formed.

T/5 Virgil E. Westmoreland volunteered to drive his halftrack to the rear assembly area for supplies. Leaving his company at 2000, he drove through the enemy fire and over fields where two tanks had been disabled by mines to the supply point and back. During the night he made a total of six trips. On one trip a tire was punctured by a shell fragment. Westmoreland dismounted, changed the tire, and continued with his job. T/5 David E. Bristol and Pfc. Walter C. King made similarly dangerous trips for the Mortar Platoon.

While the B Cos. were fighting for Hills 209 and 211, A Cos. assaulted and captured the town of Kufferath. During this assault S/Sgt. Andrew Hovdestadt, Co. A, 46th, volunteered for several of the most hazardous jobs. He led aggressive patrols into Kufferath, cleaning out houses and securing the town. The sergeant was clearing the town when an artillery shell burst near him and he fell mortally wounded. Despite his wound, Sgt. Hovdestadt urged his squad to continue the attack, then crawled to a covered position where he helped other wounded men to safety. He died at the battalion aid station.

In the two operations — the taking of Hills 209 and 211 and the capture of Kufferath — 98 prisoners were taken, 175 of the enemy were killed or wounded, and 11 anti-tank guns and six machine guns were destroyed.

For the next five days CC A continued to hold the objectives they had taken. On the night of Dec.17 Col. Burton took over the defense of the sector with B and C Cos. of the 46th, and the tanks were pulled back to form a reserve force.

Enemy artillery continued to pound relentlessly throughout the period. At the command post of the 34th they kept a record of the number of rounds that fell in the immediate area during one night. The total was 825. This extremely heavy fire tore up the telephone wires and disrupted all communication between companies and battalions. T/Sgt. George W. McClung, 46th communications sergeant, worked night and day under sniper and artillery fire to keep the vital lines in. At one place he found 17 breaks in his line which had been chopped up by incoming artillery shells. He quickly repaired the breaks, restoring communications.

The 47th Artillery fired repeated concentrations against the enemy batteries. Meanwhile, a search was made for enemy paratroopers reported dropped on the morning of Dec.18, and a close watch was kept for any signs of a counter-offensive from across the Roer.

On Dec.19 the 15th Inf. of CC B was attached to CC A and the next day attacked with one platoon of A Co. of the 34th to take the high ground east of Bergheim. Eight men were loaded on the deck of each tank and the remainder of the infantry deployed to the flanks and rear. The force moved out at 1000 and cleared a draw leading to the objective. One tank was stopped by bazooka fire, but the attack pushed on, forcing back the defending German infantrymen.

Evacuation Under Fire

On the objective, heavy anti-tank and artillery fire from the flanks smashed two more tanks. Lt. Joseph Mullens dismounted to confer with the infantry commander. He and five infantrymen were wounded by artillery fire. Cpl. Michael C. Korinko dismounted from his tank and rendered first aid. The artillery fire became so intense that the wounded could not be evacuated by litter. T/5 Lester R. Holder, who had already been shot out of two tanks, drove his third tank astride the wounded and took all six in through the bottom escape hatch. His tank was hit six times by armor piercing projectiles which gouged deep holes but bounced off.

That afternoon a platoon of C Co. of the 46th, the 46th Reconnaissance Platoon and one tank platoon of C Co., 34th, launched an attack on Schneidhausen. The infantry pushed northeast from Hill 211 at 1500 and the tanks attacked the town from the northwest, supporting the infantry assault by fire. Under heavy fire from the village and from across the Roer, the attackers battled to within 100 yards of the town before they were stopped. Then, as darkness fell, they withdrew to Hill 211 for the night.

The next day B Co. of the 46th made another attack toward Schneidhausen. Ahead of the infantrymen lay 800 yards of open, rolling terrain. Eight tanks of Co. C, 34th, on

the left flank of Hill 211 were supporting the action. Moving forward through heavy artillery, mortar and automatic weapons fire, the company came into position for the final assault on the town. Before they could move out the supporting tank fire had to be lifted. Radios failed to make contact with the tanks.

Pfc. John Bowen, a rifleman of Co. B, volunteered to cross 600 yards of open ground to the west and contact the tanks. This entire distance was under direct observation by the enemy, and the area was subjected to very heavy artillery and mortar fire. Fully aware of the risk, Pfc. Bowen ran for 100 yards through intense fire. An enemy machine gun opened up on him. Bowen dropped to the ground and simulated death. His action diverted the machine gun. He remained motionless for several minutes, then once more rushed forward. Making six rushes, and under fire the entire time, he succeeded in reaching the tanks. The fire was lifted and the assault platoons of Co. B continued on to take Schneidhausen.

Even before the actual assault on the town, B Co. had lost all its officers with the assaulting platoons. First Sgt. Walter Jones (later commissioned a lieutenant) went forward with a SCR 300 radio strapped on his back and assumed command. This radio proved to be the only means of communication with the battalion command post and the supporting artillery. Sgt. Jones acted as a forward observer and directed artillery fire which smashed an attempted enemy counterattack. He then led patrols through the mine-infested town and eliminated the last remaining enemy.

It seemed impossible that the bridge over the Roer River could still be intact, but Sgt. Jones led a patrol out to see. Two men of the patrol were seriously wounded by anti-personnel mines. Unwilling to expose the other members, he continued alone until he could see that the bridge was intact. He then returned, personally checked each of the company's defensive positions and supervised the search for wounded.

Throughout the afternoon T/5 Angelo Squitieri, an aid man with B Co., had worked under fire to administer to his wounded comrades. That night he, too, was wounded. He found a safe basement in Schneidhausen and had the wounded brought there. Soon there were 32 at the aid station, and all the water was exhausted. The only source was the Roer River, 150 yards beyond the outpost line.

The open ground to the river was fully exposed to the enemy's guns and a bright moon aided German observation. However, S/Sgt. Arthur L. Bading and S/Sgt. Mathew M. Mszauski gathered canteens and set out for the river. Almost immediately the enemy spotted them and laid down a heavy mortar concentration. As they neared the river a sniper opened fire. Sgt. Bading worked his way forward while Sgt. Mszauski deliberately exposed himself. The sniper fired again and Bading killed him with an accurately thrown hand grenade. The two men reached the river, filled the canteens and returned to the wounded.

Throughout the night T/5 Aquitieri continued to work on the wounded, although he became so weak that he had to be helped from one patient to another. When he was relieved at 0900 the next morning, it was discovered that he had a penetrating wound of the abdomen.

Relief

At 0730 on Dec. 22 the 83rd Inf. Div. began relieving B Co. in Schneidhausen. Because of the shortage of litters, 14 of the wounded had to be left in the basement where they had spent the night. Sgt. Benjamin O. Morisch, in Kufferath, learned of this and organized an aid party with plasma, instruments, litters and litter bearers. He relieved Aquitieri in Schneidhausen and, by 1145, had given treatment to all of the patients. The litter party then started back for Kufferath. Halfway to the town a heavy mortar barrage fell, killing one man and seriously wounding another. Sgt. Morisch rallied his party and continued on to Kufferath.

The relief of CC A by the 83rd Division continued on Dec. 22. The following day the command moved back to Hahn, and Dec. 24 it moved to Baelen, near Eupen, Belgium. There it was placed on a six-hour alert status for possible operation against the German "Bulge".

Christmas Day was quiet and clear, with the first sunshine in weeks. The alert status was changed to two hours, but the command was able to celebrate Christmas.

COMBAT COMMAND B

In early December Col. John T. Cole received orders to move his command into the Hurtgen Forest. Its mission: to clear the Germans from the area extending from Kleinhau to Winden, a town on the Roer River. The area was one of the last and most stubborn pockets west of the Roer. The fight to clear that few square miles of ground was the hardest and bloodiest the men of CC B were ever to tackle.

Dec. 9 and 10 the tanks and halftracks rumbled up the tortuous, muddy trails of the shell-scarred forest.

The combat command assembled in the woods just west of Kleinhau and started to dig in. Almost immediately they were strafed and bombed by German planes flyng at tree-top level. The medics counted 18 casualties.

Light snow covered the solidly-frozen ground the morning of Dec. 11 when riflemen of the 15th Armd. Inf. Bn. dismounted from their halftracks and prepared to attack. At 0745 they moved out, passed the battered town of Kleinhau and moved toward the high wooded ground a mile to the northeast.

Supporting each infantry company was a platoon of tanks from each of the line companies of the 81st Tank Bn. On the right flank were riflemen from A and B Troops of the 85th Cavalry Recon. Squadron. F Co. of the 85th was attached to the 4th Cavalry Group, working further south. Artillery support was supplied by the 71st Armd. Field Artillery Bn.

The reports that the area up to the line of departure had been cleared of all Germans had been highly inaccurate, for when the doughboys started across the exposed ground, a heavy barrage of artillery and mortar fire was laid down on them. They also received accurate small arms fire from their right flank from three machine guns, two bazooka teams and German riflemen concealed in a thick patch of pine trees. One of the first casualties was the commander of the 15th Inf. A Co., Capt. Donald K. Krafts, who was killed.

The assault wave pushed on, but when forward elements started up the slope of the hill, heavy machine gun fire pinned down the attackers.

Despite flying shell fragments and machine gun bullets, S/Sgt. Louis J. San Martino of the 15th's A Co. continued to crawl forward. When he was certain he had located the exact position of the German machine gun emplacement, he signaled to Pvt. Wade N. Spruill who had set up his mortar in a shell hole.

Pvt. Spruill realized he was in full view of the German forward artillery observer and when he put his mortar into action he would become the special target for enemy shells. He started lobbing shells into the enemy position. His sixth round was a direct hit, destroying the machine gun nest.

Attack! Attack!

The riflemen trudged forward again and advanced until A Co.'s 2nd Platoon, which was in the forward elements, lost its platoon leader, Lt. Bass Redd, who was killed, and its platoon sergeant, T/Sgt. Richard Rosner, who was wounded. When these key men were hit, the other members of the platoon became hesitant and disorganized. The attack bogged down.

S/Sgt. Frank M. DiTaranto immediately assumed charge of the platoon. Exposing himself to heavy fire, he crawled forward from man to man and organizet the scattered remnants into a fighting unit. Charging forward again, they reached the edge of the woods.

The B Co. commander, Capt. Arthur Elmore, was also wounded in the assault, but Lt. Merle S. Power quickly took over, reorganized the company and resumed the attack. He led the assault by preceding the leading elements of the attack wave and continued to push forward until he was killed by a German machine gun.

By now A Co. alone had suffered 60 casualties. Every line company commander in the 15th Inf. had been killed or wounded.

Darkness came early that cold winter night and the riflemen dug into the frozen ground to hold their positions. Through the long night spent in their foxholes they had only their overcoats to keep them warm.

Intense artillery and mortar fire made it impossible for trucks, peeps or other thin-skinned vehicles to haul badly-needed supplies up to the front. The 81st's D Co. was called on to do the job with its light tanks. Lt. Benjamin T. Potts had the men in his platoon load rations, water and clothing on the rear decks of their tanks and they started toward the forward positions.

In the darkness they missed the guide who was to show them where to unload the supplies. Going beyond the outposts, they went into territory still held by the enemy. Fired on by small arms and mortars, they turned around and started back up the road.

Going back, they found their route around two knocked-out Shermans was now blocked by a light tank from their platoon which had hit a mine. Climbing out of the turret, Lt. Potts got in front of his tank and started to lead it between the two Shermans when it, too, struck a mine. The explosion killed him and seriously wounded his driver, T/4 Peter J. Thauwald.

Heroes Are Made

During the next two days, riflemen from the 15th Inf. and 85th Recon. and tankers from the 81st continued to clear infiltrating Germans from the woods and to hold the high ground despite extremely heavy artillery and mortar fire. Each day the troops hacked their way forward a few hundred yards against the most bitter enemy resistance. Every advance of a hundred yards meant another foxhole. Every foxhole meant back-breaking hours of work digging through the foot-thick frozen crust of earth.

Heroism was accepted as nothing less than duty in Hurtgen Forest during those days. When he saw his squad leader fall wounded on a patch of open ground, Sgt. John Tivvis of the 15th's C Co. crawled forward to an exposed position and put fire on enemy snipers so that aid men could get to the wounded soldier. He then helped evacuate the man across several hundred yards of ground under shellfire.

Wounded during the first day's attack and evacuated to the aid station, C Co.'s S/Sgt. William Carter returned to the fight and was wounded again the second day. Both times he was told at the aid station to wait for the ambulance which would evacuate him to a field hospital, but both times he slipped off and returned to his company. When he turned up the aid station the third time the surgeon knew that Sgt. Carter would not go back to his company again. He had been wounded in the foot and could not walk.

The enemy's intense shelling had taken a heavy toll again the second day. The 15th's new A Co. commander, Capt. Roderick Smith, had his command only a few hours before he, too, was wounded and evacuated. Command of the company fell to the only remaining officer, Lt. Francis C. Darby.

That night, three days and two nights after they had pushed off, the 15th Inf. reported the strength of its three line companies at four officers and 170 enlisted men. At full strength they have 18 officers and 735 enlisted men.

Reinforcements Arrive

Just before dusk that night Lt. Miles Light moved his machine gun platoon from the 15th's headquarters forward to support the line companies. As they were digging in on the high ground a German soldier came out of the woods and surrendered. It was too late to take the prisoner back to the rear that night. Lt. Light bedded him down in a large foxhole between himself and another member of the platoon. In the morning when Lt. Light checked the other foxholes in the area to make certain his men were awake, he found three sleeping Germans in one hole and four in another. The fighting was that close in Hurtgen Forest.

The difficult job of supplying the dug-in troops in the line continued to be handled by the light tanks of Capt. Harold M. Schiering's D Co. The tanks rolled forward with loads of rations, water and clothing, and returned with wounded doughboys stretched out on their rear decks. Mines planted by infiltrating Germans were always a serious threat to the tanks. This problem was quickly solved on one run by Lt. Henry V. Plass. Pulling his tank up behind a knocked- out engineers' bridge truck which lay at the side of the road, Lt. Plass converted the truck into a mine sweeper by pushing it ahead of him the rest of the way to Strass, where he delivered his supplies.

On the third day of the battle the 15th's anti-tank platoons left their 57 mm. guns in the rear and went forward as riflemen to reinforce the dwindling rifle platoons. The 2nd Bn. of the 83rd Inf. Div.'s 330th Regiment had been attached to CC B on Dec. 12. The next day the 81st Tank Bn.'s C Co., commanded by Capt. William L. Guthrie, was ordered to support the 330th which was holding the sector around Strass on the left flank.

Two of C Co.'s platoons moved out in the early morning. When the tanks reached Schafberg, on the road to Strass, they were fired on by anti-tank guns. Mines prevented the tanks from deploying. In rapid succession four tanks were hit. Three of them burned and the turret was jammed on the fourth.

Although the tank commanded by S/Sgt. Raymond W. Beltz was hit three times, he continued to shell the enemy position until a fourth German projectile whined across the contested ground and ripped into the barrel of his gun. When the men removed the round they had intended to fire, they found a piece of shrapnel from the German shell sticking in its nose.

The scheduled attack by the 330th was cancelled and the C Co. tanks were ordered to their assembly area.

MEDICS ! MEDICS !

CC B was now out of contact with the 330th and it was vitally necessary that communications be re-established. Lt. Carlo Lombardi of the 81st's D Co., was asked to attempt to reach the attached battalion with his radio-equipped tank. Between his tank and the 330th lay a stretch of open mined ground that was covered by direct fire of the anti-tank guns which had knocked out the C Co. tanks. Lt. Lombardi's driver, T/4 Roy P. Rusteberg, ran the gantlet successfully, and communications were re-established with the isolated unit.

The men continued to fight forward, yard by yard, but every few yards they advanced cost them heavy casualties. Medical officers and aid men worked unceasingly to treat and evacuate the wounded.

At the 15th Inf. aid station the medical officers, Capt. Leroy Holbert and Capt. George Tempel, and their assistants were red-eyed and exhausted. In their medical dressing tent and on all sides of it they treated casualties from all of the units fighting on this sector. During the first day they had cared for 150 wounded men, 200 the second day and 100 the third.

When the wounded started pouring in during the first day, the little detachment found that it could not treat all of them without assistance. Help was sent from their Service Co. and from B Co. of the 75th Medical Bn.

S/Sgt. Edmund W. Harrigan led four peeps up the shell-torn road the first day and evacuated the wounded who were scattered in the fields on both sides of the road. But when the companies pushed further ahead, only tanks could be used to get the wounded out of the cold, muddy fields where they had fallen and bring them back through the concentrations of artillery and mortar fire.

Up with the rifle platoons the 12 medical aid men, only two of whom finally came out of the battle without being

casualties themselves, worked day and night bandaging up the wounded and starting them on their difficult trip to the aid station.

After making three attempts to crawl out into an open field to evacuate a casualty and each time being driven back by sniper fire, Sgt. Leon Kraskin, an aid man, stood up and walked to the wounded man. The sniper fired again and the bullet grazed the back of his head, driving a piece of the helmet into his scalp. But Sgt. Kraskin disregarded his own wound and after applying compresses to the infantryman's wounds, dragged him across a hundred yards of ground to safety.

Pfc. L. T. Gotchy, another aid man, worked continuously without rest for two days and nights and finally, against his wishes, had to be evacuated himself. Not only did he care for the wounded, rescuing men from open ground considered untenable by infantrymen, but he also helped them dig foxholes and led tank convoys to and from the rear with loads of rations and water.

Despite the tremendous casualties, lack of sleep and rest and exposure to the bitter cold, the men pushed forward — 50 yards here, 100 yards there. It was slow, agonizing fighting. By now the command had worked themselves forward almost to the edge of the woods. Ahead of them lay 1200 yards of open ground, covered by a dozen German guns.

Open Ground Is Hell On The Infantry

During all this time, Lt. Col. Glenn G. Dickenson, 15th Inf. commander; Major Charles I. Webb, battalion S—3, and Major Emerson Hurley, then assistant S—3, had stayed in the forward positions, encouraging and helping the men. The sight of their battalion officers checking the furthermost outposts and undergoing the same dangers and hardships they were enduring gave the men of the 15th Inf. a morale boost that nothing else could have done at the time.

On the morning of Dec. 14, CC B attacked across the open ground. B and C Cos. of the 15th led, with A Co. in close support. Their objective was a quarry which was in another woods directly across the exposed ground. They planned to assault the quarry and push on quickly to the high ground northwest of Bilstein. A and B Troops of the 85th Recon. were on the right flank. Each company of the 15th was supported by one platoon of tanks from each of the 81st medium tank companies. Ahead of the riflemen, artillery and mortar barrages were laid down by the 71st Artillery batteries and 81st Mortar Platoon.

As the infantrymen moved down out of the woods to the open ground in the draw, the Germans turned every available mortar and artillery piece on the area. Pfc. Harry Grubert of the 15th's A Co. saw his squad leader killed by a mortar shell. Without hesitation he assumed command of the shaken and disorganized squad.

The forward observer for the 71st Artillery, Lt. William S. Martin, was directing the fire of his batteries on enemy positions when an enemy shell crashed through the underbrush and dug into the ground beside him — a dud.

Sgt. Robert Rufiange saw ten members of his platoon fall seriously wounded when his 15th's C Co. reached the draw. He administered first aid to them until all available bandages were exhausted and then under fire he went back and located two aid men. With their help he was able to evacuate the casualties.

Extensive mining and the boggy condition of the ground frustrated all attempts to use the tanks. Three Shermans were disabled by mines and the 81st A Co. commander, Capt. Robert M. McNab, was wounded.

An infantryman who had been hurt when one of the tanks backed up lay 150 yards from the edge of the woods, completely exposed. When he called for help, Lt. Light and Sgt. Clarence H. McNeely crawled out, treated the man and pulled him back to the shelter of the woods.

Artillery, mortars and machine guns blasted and pounded the open ground over which the men were trying to attack. To advance was impossible. Nothing could live in that open field more than a few seconds. The men slowly pulled back from the exposed ground into the woods, carrying their wounded with them.

Speed And Surprise Do The Trick

That afternoon Thunderbolts and Lightnings were called in from the Tactical Air Command to strafe and bomb enemy positions above the quarry. Sixteen 500-pound bombs were dropped. The bombs landed only a few hundred yards from CC B's forward positions. Blast from the explosions blew in the 75 mm. gun muzzle cover on a tank commanded by Sgt. Salvatore Candito.

The afternoon of Dec. 14, Col. Cole and Lt. Col. Le Roy H. Anderson, 81st commander, came to Lt. Col. Dickenson's command post in the forward lines to confer and plan another attack.

The open ground had to be crossed. Col. Cole decided the only possible way to cross it was to mount the remaining infantry on the rear decks of the tanks and depend on the tank's speed to get them across. The attack was set for 0830 the following morning.

Next morning the tanks pulled up to the edge of the woods in a rough V formation, infantry mounted on the rear decks. The tanks roared across the open exposed gound. Churning faster and faster, they reached the halfway mark in the clearing and rolled toward the far edge. They had caught the Germans by surprise. Few shots were fired at them. As the tanks approached the quarry area, they opened up with their tank and machine guns, riddling the forest in front of them. Infantrymen jumped from the tanks and ran toward their first objective with its six anti-tank guns. They found the guns abandoned or destroyed. The bombing, heavy artillery and crushing tank fire had forced the Germans to retreat. The tankers and infantry moved on quickly toward their next objective, the high ground beyond the quarry.

There's Always Another Objective

Meanwhile the attached 330th Inf., supported by the first and third platoons of the 81st's B Co., had pushed forward toward their objective, the town of Bergheim. They reached the town at noon.

At first it was intended to advance on the third objective, the high ground southeast of Bergheim, the same day. But little daylight remained of the short December day in which to organize and execute the plan. Riflemen did not jump off, therefore, until just before dawn the next morning. Because the two infantry battalions, the 15th and the 2nd Bn. of the 330th, had suffered such heavy casualties, the attack was carried out by A and B Troops of the 85th Recon.

At 0900 Capt. Weldon M. Wilson, whose 81st B Co. tanks were supporting the 85th, reported that all Germans had been cleared from the objective. He was then ordered to return with his tanks to the assembly area.

Late that afternoon a handful of men, all that was left of the 15th's C Co., supported by the 2nd Platoon of tanks from the 81st's A Co., jumped off to attack the little town of Bilstein on the right flank.

As the tanks rolled toward the objective, S/Sgt. James P. Davis, who had become leader of the platoon after its lieutenant was wounded, noticed that only three of his five tanks were grinding across the open ground toward the town. He was unsuccessful in his attempts to make contact with the missing tanks by radio.

Later, when T/4 Herman Hawkins and Pfc. Arthur Medaros crossed the same mined field under fire, Sgt. Davis learned from them that their tanks had been disabled by mines.

Despite the heavy shelling, the riflemen cleared the town just before dark, flushing 17 prisoners out of the basements with grenades.

"In one of the basements we surprised a bunch of Krauts preparing a hot meal. They had fresh steaks from a cow they had just slaughtered," said Lt. Robert H. Hoffman, commander of the 15th's C Co., "After we sent the prisoners back to the PW cage, we made certain the dinner wasn't wasted. It was our first hot meal in seven days."

After taking its objectives, the 15th Inf. dug in ,and each morning repelled an enemy counterattack. On Dec.19 the battalion was attached to CC A and the next morning attack orders came down to them again. Their mission was to overrun the remaining enemy positions on the high ground west of Winden.

No Rest For The Engineers

"When we heard that order, we thought the jig was really up," said T/Sgt. William H. Guinn of C Co., 15th Inf., who had during the action on this front gone from squad leader to platoon sergeant, to platoon leader and finally to leader of the combined remnants of two platoons. "There were only 32 of us left in our company and we thought this attack would certainly finish off the rest of us."

On Dec. 20, at 0915, they jumped off. B and C Cos. and the Machine Gun Platoon led the attack and A Co. was in reserve. By 1100 they had taken their objective, killing the Germans who put up a fight and driving the rest into Winden.

This same morning the 330th advanced southeast against Untermaubach, but because of the terrain conditions, a cliff on one side of the town, and extensive mining of the approach route, it was impossible to bring up tanks to support the infantry. They were unable to get beyond the outskirts of the town. B and C Troops of the 4th Cavalry Group, however, were successful in taking Bogheim.

After the infantry, without tank support, made another unsuccessful attempt to storm Untermaubach on Dec. 21, Capt. Rolf E. Mickelson, commander of B Co of the 22nd Engineers, received orders that his outfit would have to clear the road to the town that night at all costs.

Seven attempts had been made during the day and each one had failed because of the heavy concentrations of mortar and artillery fire that the Germans laid down on the road. That night the enemy guns continued to pound the road with interdictory fire, but Sgt. John J. Morgan and his crack mine-sweeping squad went to work with detectors and probes, determined to open an attack route for the tanks.

Earlier, Sgt. Lee Serratt and his crew had cleared the road from Bergheim to Bilstein so that bogged-down tanks could be evacuated. They had completed their mission in spite of the bursting shells of searing white phosphorous which the enemy had thrown in on them.

There had been no rest for the B Co. engineers during the entire action on this front. In one two-day period they had removed 450 mines, which included wooden box and S type mines and booby-trapped Teller mines. While mine-sweeping teams were busy digging mines out of the supply and attack routes, the rest of the company, working in day and night shifts, cleared the wreckage and debris from the roads. In six days they hauled 45 truck-loads of rubble out of Hurtgen and Kleinhau to repair roads into Obermaubach.

Sgt. Morgan and his men succeeded in lifting all of the mines from the Untermaubach road that night and early the next morning the tanks from the 2nd Platoon of the 81st's B Co. rolled into the town, blasting paths for the infantry. Rumbling up to each house in town, the tanks fired a high explosive shell into the front door and literally blew the defenders out into the hands of the infantry.

North of the town, on the road from Winden, a heroic stand was being made by A Troop of the 85th Recon. By putting themselves into a pocket from which there was no withdrawal, they blocked every attempt by the Germans to reinforce the Untermaubach garrison from the north and made the successful assault on the town possible. For this action they received the "Presidential Citation."

Untermaubach fell at 1600 on Dec. 22. Two hundred prisoners were marched back to PW cages.

Out Of The Line For Christmas

That night, after 12 days of the most bitter fighting, news came to the companies that they would be relieved immediately. Under cover of darkness they were to move

out of the front lines and start toward a rest area in the rear.

"When the Germans heard the movement behind our lines, they decided to take advantage of the confusion and launch a local counterattack in our sector," said Lt. Warren A. Hedlin, commander of the 15th's B Co.

In the darkness T/Sgt. Anton J. Kembic could hear the enemy soldiers coming up the hill, clicking the bolts of their guns. Crawling silently forward, he watched the Germans set up a machine gun which was to be the backbone of their attack. Retiring to his foxhole again, he waited for them to fire first so that he could be certain of the gun's position. Then he opened up, knocked out the gun and broke up the counter-attack.

CC B was relieved on the night of Dec. 22, but two days later, on the morning of Christmas Eve, a few infantrymen from the 15th were still in the line. On the high ground overlooking Winden, eight men from C Co. huddled in foxholes, wondering how much longer they would able to hold out.

For four days they had been there, suffering from the cold and sweating out the enemy shells and small arms fire that was thrown at them. During this time their only food had been a loaf of German bread which they had found in one of the foxholes. To quench their thirst they had licked icicles which had frozen on the edge of a piece of canvas.

At headquarters they were listed as "missing in action." No one knew they were there because the officer who had posted them had been evacuated as a casualty.

When in the early light of the morning they saw doughboys and frost-covered tanks emerge from the forest behind them, Cpl. Richard Stephen remarked, "Well, it's another attack."

Grabbing their rifles, they prepared to join the assault. But when the attackers reached their positions, they saw that these men were strangers. It was then that they learned their company had been relieved two days before. Picking up one member of their squad whose feet had been frozen, they headed home to their company for Christmas.

Alerted For Ardennes

The divison was pulled back on Dec. 24 to an assembly area in Belgium and was placed in 21st Army Group reserve. CC B bivouacked about four miles northeast of Verviers. On Christmas Eve all units were placed on a two-hour alert. They were ordered to be prepared to move south, if necessary, against the northern edge of von Rundstedt's salient on the Western Front.

Although snow suits were issued and vehicles painted white, the call to go into action against the German "bulge" did not come. Two days after Christmas the 71st Artillery's Lt. Alexander D. Fraser and his driver, Sgt. Harold D. Freeman, were killed during a German air attack on Verviers, Belgium. Also killed in this bombing was CC B's Signal Officer, Lt. George M. Willets.

There was more enemy air activity on Dec. 31 when a 500-pound was dropped in the 71st Artillery area, but it caused no casualties. Then, on New Year's Day, seven ME 109's attacked the CC B area. Five were shot down.

During the command's stay there the casualty-depleted ranks were brought up to full strength by the arrival of reinforcements. The 15th Inf. got 275 new men. During the latter part of January the 71st moved its batteries east of Roetgen to support the 78th Inf. Div. in its attacks there. On Jan. 28 the command moved to Hergenrath and then, on Feb. 5, north to Herleen, in Holland.

COMBAT COMMAND A AT EICHERSCHIED

Combat Command A was attached to the 78th Inf. Div. on Jan. 28 and was given the mission of taking the town of Eicherschied in the Kesternich-Konzen area of the Siegfried Line. The 47th and 71st Armd. Field Artillery Bns. moved into firing positions to support the attack.

The married A and B Cos., plus the 34th Tank Bn. Headquarters Co., comprising a task force under Lt. Col. William L. Cabaniss, moved to the vicinity of Lammersdorf the night of Jan. 29. Task Force Burton stayed at Neudorf. The night was bitterly cold and deep, drifting snow covered the ground.

The attack on Eicherschied was set for the next morning.

At 0530 on Jan. 30, after a five-minute artillery preparation, the 78th Inf. Div. jumped off, making two diverging attacks. One force pushed toward Huppenbroich; the other toward Imgenbroich. A Co., 22nd Engineers, began work immediately behind the infantry to clear the enemy minefields for CC A's attack on the right flank of the infantry. The married A Cos. were to jump off at 0730, but clearing the minefields was hampered by the deep snow and the attack hour was moved up.

Lt. Leonard Hammer of A Co., 22nd Engineers, directed the work in front of the tanks. Three flails were knocked out by mines and a fourth by direct fire while clearing the minefield.

At 1000 the A Cos. were ordered to attack through whatever mines remained.

Snow Makes Going Tough

Capt. Richard E. Biederman reconnoitered a route for his tanks around an ungapped minefield. A Co., 34th, tanks rumbled down the main road, followed by A Co., 46th, halftracks, then veered to the left into open country when they found the road blocked. The tanks, moving cross-country, ploughed through the heavy snow, but the halftracks stalled. A Co. infantrymen bailed out of their halftracks and began walking through the deep snow. The tanks churned toward Eicherschied, 3000 yards away, with three platoons in broad wedge formation, firing as they moved. They ploughed over desolate, snow-covered landscape with hedgerows marked by lines of deep, drifted snow. An anti-tank gun opened fire from the east, but a stiff breeze whipped up a cloud of fine snow which helped screen the tanks and its fire was inaccurate. Occasional rounds of German artillery dropped among the struggling infantrymen.

The tanks wallowed on through the snow, drifted in places into 14-foot high banks. They moved in a devious route through the hedgerows after several tanks bellied on large concealed stumps and had to be pulled off.

A Co. infantrymen struggled to keep up with the lumbering tanks, but it was impossible to keep pace. The infantrymen couldn't walk more than 60 or 70 yards without flopping in the snow for rest. Control of the infantrymen was difficult. The extreme cold froze up most of the infantry radios. Machine guns froze, too, and they had to depend on rifles, grenades and bazookas. Two companies of the 311th Inf. were following A Co., 46th, and the companies became mixed as the snow capes everyone wore hid all rank and division insignia. Col. Cabaniss, reconnoitering on foot, was wounded and command of the assault force fell to the commander of the attached 1st Bn., 311th Inf.

At 1130 Capt. Raymond Weeks, commander of B Co., 34th, and Capt. John W. Hewitt, commander of B Co., 46th, came up with one platoon of the married B Cos., tanks towing the halftracks, and formed on the right of Capt. Biederman. Capt. Billy Devault's A Co., 46th, could be sighted slowly moving up through the flying snow.

By 1230, A Co., 34th, had deployed behind the last defilade before Eicherschied. The infantry still struggled in the snow, far behind, so Capt. Biederman called for a Corps "time on target" concentration on the town. Twenty-one battalions of artillery hit Eicherschied at the same time. The town exploded in one violent mass.

The attack on the town started and the deployed forces moved over the crestline with all guns firing. Debris was still falling from the artillery concentration. Three 88's, camouflaged with white sheets threatened the advancing tanks, one to the right and two to the left, and all with good fields of fire.

One enemy gun fired three rounds close to Sgt. William Kundman's tank. Kundman swung his turret quickly, his 75 mm. gun roared and pieces of the enemy gun flew into the air. Lt. Otho E. Thomas discovered a second gun and split the barrel with one round. Lt. Gerald F. Axner knocked out the third gun and T/5 Clayton Wainwright jumped from his tank, threw a white phosphorous grenade into the gun position, flushing the gun crew from their foxholes.

"Married Companies" Assault Town

The tanks rolled up to the edge of the town and stood outside, pumping shells into the houses and buildings until the infantry came up. At 1600 the assault was begun by the married A and B Cos. and the 311th in close support. A Cos. took the east half of the town, and the B Cos. the west half. Tanks pulled up to buildings, fired round after round of high explosive into the doors and windows, then doughboys ran into the basements and dug out the terrified Germans. The tank-infantry teams, working with practiced precision, cleaned out house after house, block after block. They were old hands at this business and they worked fast and sure at cleaning out the town.

By 1800 the town was clear and outposts were set up. A Co. engineers worked throughout the afternoon to clear the main road into Eicherschied of snow and mines. During the night a 311th patrol went to the Roer River and contacted the 8th Inf. Div.

The town finally yielded 230 prisoners, including three women, two in German army uniforms. The prisoners wore makeshift white camouflage suits with diapers, doilies, sheets and tablecloths predominating. They looked dirty, tired and beaten.

Lt. Mayo Elliot, A Co., 46th, platoon leader, and his men captured a German medical aid station while mopping up the town. The German medics were armed with pistols. "The pistols are for the hopelessly wounded," a German medical officer explained apologetically. "We put the muzzle against the patient's heart, pull the trigger, and he is out of his misery."

At 0800 on Dec. 31 the married A and B Cos. moved out to take the high ground beyond Eicherschied, and gained it with little resistance. That afternoon the 311th began to relieve CC A. The relief was completed at 2300 and the entire combat command moved to its former billets in Neudorf.

Men in CC A agreed that taking Eicherschied had been a good operation. Casualties had been extremely low, important ground had been taken and key enemy guns had been destroyed.

In this operation CC A captured or destroyed four anti-tank guns, one 150 mm. howitzer and three 120 mm. mortars. The 47th Artillery fired 2000 rounds in support and claimed the destruction of five additional anti-tank guns.

In the Roer to Rhine campaign the division began to fight the kind of war for which it was designed. Speed and firepower, the division's two important weapons, could be utilized, and enemy defenses crumbled. The division had picked up speed and had started to roll when it was stopped by the Rhine River.

Action from the Roer to the Rhine was characterized by ferocious fighting in the initial stages as the Germans tried to hold their strong prepared defenses east of the Roer. They fought bitterly for every yard of ground. Later, the enemy defenses broken, the division's tanks and halftracks rolled down the highways and cross-country, fighting a running battle all the way to the Rhine.

CC B was the first combat command committed, and struck the toughest defenses. Bad weather, fortified lines and soggy terrain hampered their movement, but the CC B armored columns battered their way through Erklenz and Rheindahlen and cleared the area to Munchen-Gladbach.

CC A passed through CC B to attack through Viersen, Anrath and to the outskirts of Krefeld.

CC R, the last command into the fight, struck to the Elbe, reaching the river at Orsoy after fighting through Huls, Mors and Repelen.

The division artillery fired its biggest mission helping the infantry divisions storm across the Roer River to begin the campaign. They fired more than 10,000 rounds in less than three hours in supporting the assault.

COMBAT COMMAND B

Combat Command B was chosen to drive the first armored lance into enemy forces which faced the Ninth Army across the Roer River. On Feb. 24 it moved to Baesweiler, Germany. Then, at 0600 the following morning, it began to move across the river to the bridgehead which the 102nd Inf. had secured on the east bank. Task Force Dickenson, consisting of the married A Cos. of the 81st Tank and 15th Inf. Bns. and one platoon of A Troop, 85th Recon, led the way.

Fires were still crackling and blazing in the battered town of Linnich as the tanks and halftracks rumbled between the charred walls, which leaned precariously over the streets, toward the treadway bridge that spanned the river. The bridge site was concealed under clouds of chemical smoke, but enemy artillery shells were still falling in the area. Enemy planes tried continuously to break through the ack-ack screens to get at the bridge. T/4 Raymond J. Gouck, of the 15th's Service Co., ran out into a street to rescue a soldier who had been hit in the chest by a piece of falling flak.

After CC B assembled south of Hottorf, Gen. Oliver came to Col. Cole's command post and outlined the final details of the command's mission. It was to help the 102nd take Erkelenz by skirting around the town and cutting all communications with Rheindahlen. Also, CC B was to capture the five towns of Wockerath, Terheeg, Mennekrath, Kaulhausen and Venrath in order to secure the XIII Corps east flank. H-hour was 12 noon, D-day was Feb. 26.

Col. Cole assigned the job of seizing these first objectives to Task Force Anderson, which consisted of the married B and C Cos. of the 81st and 15th. To accomplish his mission as quickly as possible, Col. Anderson divided his two married companies into four groups. In support he would have elements of B Co. of the 628th Tank Destroyer Bn. and the 71st Artillery. He also decided that he would have to overrun the towns of Wey and Hof Roitz, two intermediate objectives, in order to secure the right flank of CC B's zone of action.

"All Objectives Taken"

At noon, under gray, rain-laden skies, the tanks and halftracks spilled out on the Rhineland plains and started rolling toward their objectives.

A Time magazine correspondent who watched the attack from the air wrote:

"From the air in a Piper Cub the tank drive was a thing of the sheerest military beauty: First came a long row of throbbing tanks moving like heavy dark beetles over the green cabbage fields of Germany in a wide swath—many, many tanks in a single row abreast. Then, a suitable distance behind, came another great echelon of tanks even broader, out of which groups would wheel from their brown mud tracks in the green fields to encircle and smash fire at some stubborn strong point. Behind this came miles of trucks, full of troops, maneuvering perfectly to mop up by-passed tough spots. Then came the field artillery to pound hard knots into submission. From the flanks sped clouds of tank destroyers, cutting across the landscape in wild swoops that hit the enemy and cut off communications with bewildering speed."

Artillery and small arms fire was thrown at the waves of tanks, but the heaviest fire was received from Holzweiler, where elements of the 11th Panzer Div. were entrenched with anti-tank guns. Direct fire enemy anti-tank guns knocked out six tanks.

Maintenance men of the 81st's B Co. pulled into a field near Wey and, after dodging anti-tank shells and machine gun tracers that whined over their heads, managed to evacuate two disabled tanks. Later they learned that the area was mined.

Six hours and 45 minutes after the assault began, all objectives had been taken. Twenty-five Germans had been killed, 16 captured, and six anti-tank guns and three mortars had been destroyed.

That night, after Task Force Anderson consolidated its positions around Mennekrath, Task Force Dickenson moved forward to the Erkelenz-Terheeg road. The entire combat command prepared to attack in the morning.

Fire Fight

The objective was the town of Rheindahlen, key to the defenses protecting the strategic city of Munchen-Gladbach. Task Force Anderson was to storm the town in a frontal assault while Task Force Dickson was to knife around to the left flank and cut the railroad on the western edge of the town. Col. Cole instructed his task force commanders to move as fast as possible toward the main objective without stopping to clean out completely the intermediate towns.

The attack kicked off at 0700 and the tanks and halftracks started rumbling across a soft field on which a knocked-down British plane was scattered in a thousand pieces. Task Force Anderson was led by the married B Cos., which advanced in two assault waves.

First opposition was encountered after they crossed the railroad northeast of Erkelenz and started moving north on the broad plain between Rath and Herrath. Although the towns on the flanks were pounded with artillery fire as the tanks by-passed them, anti-tank shells came whining out of Rath on the left flank, smashed into one of the tanks and set it ablaze. Swinging their 75's to the left, the tanks immediately poured direct counter-fire into enemy gun positions and they appeared to be silenced.

The handful of infantrmen who had been riding on the deck of the demolished tank found themselves the target for German mortar shells after the initial assault waves had pushed on and left them alone on the plain. Backing up into the by-passed town of Herrath on the right flank, they fought their way into one corner of the town, which was still in enemy hands.

"We fired at one of the houses and three Krauts came out with their hands raised," said Pfc. Abraham Lieberman. "I can speak a little German, and one of the Krauts showed us where they had three heavy mortars."

After following a communication line down a street, through a barnyard and kitchen and into a basement, Lt. Vincent Castner walked in and captured four German enlisted men and a captain, the latter an artillery observer.

A German Tank captured

A little later Lt. Harold L. Spiro, B Co., 15th, maintenance officer, and a crew of men were working on three halftracks that had bogged town in the soft ground about 200 yards north of Herrath when they noticed what appeared to be a company of enemy infantrymen followed by four self-propelled guns, heading toward the town. Climbing into the halftracks, they turned their machine guns on the enemy column and the Germans scattered and retreated. Before they withdrew, however, the German self-propelled guns opened up and destroyed two of the halftracks.

When Lt. Spiro and his men pulled back into Herrath, an enemy Mark IV tank rumbled out from behind one of the buildings and started down the street. It stopped as the tank commander spotted the Americans. The crew jumped out of the tank, made futile attempts to hide, then decided to surrender.

T/Sgt. Anton J. Kembic and a squad of men, after capturing several prisoners, set up defense positions to hold one corner of Herrath until a battalion from the 102nd Inf. arrived to finish cleaning out the town.

When the married C Cos. drew abreast of Rath, more anti-tank shells began to swish across the plain. The supporting batteries of the 71st laid down a barrage on the town, and while the smoke from the bursts was still spiraling above the rooftops, a platoon of the 15th's C Co. was sent to reconnoiter the enemy gun positions.

The platoon returned, with the report that no enemy guns could be found in the town. As the C Cos. pushed north behind the B Cos. assault waves, however, observers spotted a column of vehicles 1000 yards away, heading toward Rheindahlen on a

parallel route. Through binoculars they recognized the first vehicle as an American light tank. The early morning mist which clung to the plain prevented them from identifying the rest of the vehicles. Because he did not know the exact position of Task Force Dickenson, Col. Anderson ordered the tankers to hold their fire. The two forces continued to advance in parallel paths for more than a mile.

A German Column Is Destroyed

But when the lead elements of the married C Cos. reached the northern edge of a woods northeast of the town of Buchholz, they encountered a cross-fire directed at them from the woods and from the column on the parallel route. The vehicles in this column, which had deployed off the road, could now be identified as four German 75 mm. self-propelled guns mounted on Mark IV chassis and a single American light tank, repainted with German insignia. The fire from the woods came from two anti-tank guns which had allowed the initial assault wave to pass unmolested.

The enemy fire knocked out two of the 81st's C Co. tanks. The rest of the big Shermans opened up in a thunderous barrage which sent streams of shells pouring both to the east and to the west. All of the enemy guns were quickly silenced, including the captured American light tank.

"If you were to tell me that a column of tanks was fired on by two German anti-tank guns from a distance of only 200 yards and four self-propelled guns from 400 yards, and only two tanks were hit, I'd call you a damned liar. But that's what actually happened," said Capt. William L. Guthrie, commander of C Co., 81st.

Meanwhile, the married B Cos., having rolled forward past Buchholz to Hilderath and finally west to Schriefers, overran six German 170 mm. artillery pieces between Sittard and Schriefers. The lightning speed of their advance had caught these guns unmanned, the crews still sleeping in nearby houses.

But when they reached the approaches to Rheindahlen they ran up against a wall of intense fire from anti-tank and flak guns entrenched in the town. Their position became extremely critical when anti-tank guns started blasting them from both their flanks.

Extremely fast, accurate tank fire smashed the enemy on the flanks, and at the same time the married B Cos. moved into defensive positions behind the buildings in Schriefers.

After watching the bursts of artillery shells creep closer toward his halftrack, T/5 Bluford Evans of the 15th's B Co. bailed out of the driver's seat and hit the dirt just as another shell smashed into the empty halftrack and set it ablaze. Cpl. Evans had lost another halftrack under similar circumstances during the drive across France.

When Pfc. John T. Tavoularis jumped to the ground from the tank on which he was riding, he became entangled in German barbed wire. The tank's commander, Lt. Leonard L. Keene, Jr., not knowing that the infantryman was trapped in the rear of his tank, ordered it backed up to avoid the anti-tank fire. Other doughboys looked away as they saw Pfc. Tavoularis fall and the huge Sherman roll back over him. But the earth was soft and the tank, straddling him, pressed him into the pliable ground without injuring him.

"The enemy shells scorched the outsides of four of our tanks and nicked four more, but only two tanks were really knocked out," said Capt. Weldon M. Wilson, commander of B Co., 81st. "If we had moved more slowly in that attack most of our force would have been completely wiped out. It was speed that saved us."

Rheindahlen A Tough Nut

On the left flank, Task Force Dickenson was pushing forward, but not without difficulty. After crossing the Erkelenz—Rheindahlen road, the tankers and infantrymen found an anti-tank ditch, stretching all the way south to Erkelenz, blocking their route. Col. Dickenson pulled his force back and sent it around to the east of Rath and headed north along the axis of the highway.

Except for sporadic fire from Rath, they did not meet determined opposition until the tanks and halftracks of the married A Cos. came within sight of Rheindahlen. Here, after overrunning three German 75 mm. artillery pieces at Ihipshoven, they became the target for enemy anti-tank guns. Time fire burst overhead.

"We could hear the direct fire shells going over us and we thought they were scraping the top of the halftrack," said T/4 William Henke, radio operator in the 15th headquarters. "After the shells went over us, we could see them hit the ground, bounce and then explode."

Toughest knot in the enemy's Rheindahlen defence system was a thick-skinned Mark VI tank.

"Three of the Tiger tank's shells ripped into our tank," said Lt. Robert P. Lant, platoon leader in the 81st A Co. "The first two smashed our front sprockets and the third tore off our .50 caliber turret gun. But our 75 mm. gun was still okay, so we slammed about 12 shells back at the German tank."

Climbing out of his disabled Sherman, Lt. Lant boarded another tank whose commander had been wounded. He continued to lead his platoon in its swift advance. As the other tanks moved on, the Mark VI became the special baby of the platoon sergeant, S/Sgt. Jack O. Galpin, and his crew.

"We fired eight rounds to the direct front," said Sgt. Galpin. "The Kraut tank was maneuvering around, backing up and coming forward to fire, but I know we hit it at least twice."

While Sgt. Galpin and his crew were firing to their right flank, an enemy anti-tank gun opened up from the left flank and knocked out their tank.

"More of our tanks were moving up behind us, and when ours was hit, the others really poured it into that Tiger tank," said the platoon sergeant.

The Mark VI was finally knocked out by a round from the tank commanded by Lt. Shirley J. Duran. More than 36 rounds had been fired at the enemy tank before it was destroyed.

An enemy infantry attack, two platoons strong, started to move south out of the town toward the married B Cos. Tanks and halftracks leveled their guns into the advancing Germans, swept the ranks with fire, and broke up the assault. The remnants fell back into the town.

Crews of several emplaced 88's came forward and surrendered to Task Force Dickenson, but two anti-tank guns to the north of the town opened up and knocked out four more tanks.

The Air Corps Away From Home

One of these tanks disabled by the high velocity guns was the forward observation post for a section of the 81st Tank Bn. 105 mm. assault guns. It was hit three times. One of the shells, passing through both gas containers, set the tank on fire.

Scrambling out of the assistant driver's seat came Thunderbolt Pilot T. E. Todd, Air Corps liaison officer.

"I instinctively felt for my parachute when I started to bail out," said Lt. Todd, veteran of 51 Thunderbolt missions.

After clearing the tank, he was about to take off across country when he was knocked to the ground by the tank gunner, Pvt. John L. Sullivan, who leaped from the blazing turret and landed on Todd.

With the rest of the crew, he then scrambled into a shell hole as the advancing doughs, mistaking the tankers for Germans, started spraying them with small arms fire. The firing ceased when two crew men crawled toward the infantrymen and identified themselves.

The pilot then decided to tag along behind a column of prisoners moving toward the rear, but incoming shells scattered the group and he found himself again heading for a hole. In on top him came the tank driver, Pvt. Clarence Bilbrey.

After assisting a wounded doughboy to the medices, he finally reached the command post. Here he assessed his losses, which included his bedroll, binoculars and a wallet containing 200 dollars.

"I also lost my flying boots," he said. "I left them in one of the holes. They're not so good for flying low."

Most of the halftracks of both task forces had become mired down during the cross-country push toward Rheindahlen. Nine halftracks had been completely demolished. And the tankers found that they had left only a limited supply of ammunition.

For the rest of the morning the task forces remained on the southern approaches to the town, but that afternoon Task Force Dickenson, after locating a route around the maze of anti-tank ditches, moved up the western side of the town and cut the railroad. Then, when waves of advancing doughs from the 102nd Inf. Div. took over the positions to the south of the town, Task Force Anderson moved to the high ground on the southeast corner of Rheindahlen. At CC B headquarters, air panels were laid out and Col. Cole asked the air liaison officer to call Tactical Air Command for air support.

When the skies cleared that afternoon, the P-47's came roaring over, orbiting on the signal panels that pointed to their objective. As they passed over the town, orange puffs of enemy fire rose to meet them. Over the air liaison radio came the message, "Light flak over target."

Column Cover

The artillery liaison officer, Capt. Richard A. Rowlands, radioed from his peep to the 71st batteries for a counter-flak barrage and red and white smoke shells to mark the target. The artillery fire was laid, corrected and laid again. Then the Thunderbolts made a wide sweep toward the target and, peeling off singly, dived and dumped their loads. The town rocked from the tremendous explosions

Tactical Air Command sent five flights of P-47's to support the CC B assault. Three flights reduced the enemy fire from the woods to the northeast of the town. Two flights attacked enemy vehicles moving east from Viersen and also destroyed an ammunition dump, numerous vehicles and gun positions in the town.

While the noise of bombing and strafing was still rumbling across the plains, tankers of both task forces opened up and laid down a barrage of direct fire on the town. Behind this preparation the infantry pressed in and, flushing out several hundred prisoners, cleared the town without firing a shot.

This two-day battle which smashed a path through the Germans' Roer River defenses and started the rush to the Rhine cost CC B nine halftracks and one peep completely destroyed, and 20 tanks disabled by enemy shells. Task Force Anderson lost eight men killed and 39 wounded, while Task Force Dickenson suffered two men killed and 16 wounded.

Enemy losses were estimated at 150 killed, 150 wounded and 147 taken prisoner. Material captured and destroyed included four 75 mm. anti-tank self-propelled guns, three dual purpose 88's, 12 anti-tank guns of various calibers, three 75 mm. artillery

pieces, three 105 mm. howitzers, six 170 mm. artillery pieces, six 120 mm. mortars, two Mark IV tanks, one Mark V tank and one captured American light tank.

Enemy divisions that participated in the defense of Rheindahlen included elements of the 338th Inf. Div. and the 130th Panzer Lehr Div.

Only A Mop Up Is Left

Feb. 28, the day after Rheindahlen fell, CC B consolidated its positions around the town while the 102nd Inf. pushed north toward Hardt, to the west of Munchen-Gladbach. CC A passed through CC B to go into action around Hardt and start driving toward Viersen.

On March 1 Col. Cole organized a task force led by Capt. Harold M. Schiering which consisted of D Co. (light tank company) of the 81st, B Troop of the 85th Recon and one platoon from the 628th Tank Destroyers. Their mission was to block all roads from Wickrath north through Rheydt to Munchen-Gladbach and to make contact with the 29th Inf. Div. which was attacking the strategic city on the right flank.

Capt. Loran L. Vipond's B Troop cleared the woods south of Rheydt that morning and linked up in the city with elements of the 29th Division. That night the D Co. light tanks rolled up the west side of Munchen-Gladbach and occupied the towns of Venn and Poth.

Sent out to police and post "Off Limits" signs in captured Gunhoven, Sgt. Vincent T. Catapano and his CC B Military Police detachment confused the name with Genhulsen, which had not yet been cleared, and drove into the wrong town.

"We thought something was wrong when the people started leaning out of windows waving white towels and sheets," said Sgt. Catapano. "We started asking questions and found we were the first GI's to enter the town."

All three task forces remained south and west of Munchen-Gladbach for the next two days, consolidating their positions and flushing by-passed Germans from their areas. Enemy planes bombed and strafed CC B's scattered positions on March 3, causing some casualties. That night the command moved past Munchen-Gladbach and north to the outskirts of Kempen, where it bivouacked.

March 11 and 12 the different CC B units occupied the areas in and around the towns of Oedt and Vorst. Here they garrisoned the communities and set up military government machinery. The 71st Artillery batteries took over firing positions on the Rhine River. With a headquarters established at Meere Busch, their mission was to support the 11th Cavalry Group which was outposting the west bank of the river.

All units prepared and waited for the order which would send them on their last campaign on the Western Front.

COMBAT COMMAND A

Crossing the Roer River on Feb. 26, CC A moved up behind CC B as reserve. The combat command had a dual job. It was in immediate reserve and also was to protect the corps right flank. At noon Feb. 28 the command was relieved from this mission and given the task of attacking northeast from Hardt to pass between Viersen and München-Gladbach, cutting communications south and southeast of Viersen. Early next morning this mission was changed to send the command all the way to the Rhine.

During the night Major Fuller, 46th Inf. executive officer, led a patrol to the antitank ditch north of Hardt. The ditch was undefended, but the road over it was partially damaged. Lt. Frank Czuhajewski, 46th Inf., led a platoon of dismounted infantry over the ditch and toward the town of Rasseln. There they set up outposts to protect the crossing.

At 0710 CC A jumped off to the east from Rasseln, the married C Cos. leading. By 0815 the C Cos. were stopped by soft ground and the B Cos. passed through and attacked north up the main road. Tank and machine guns on the lead tanks fired continuously, probing the woods, houses and ditches for Germans. This reconnaissance fire broke the spirit of any Germans who might have wanted to fight and the command moved rapidly through Bockert, Ober Beberich, Unter and Hamm with little opposition. Whenever the column halted briefly, infantrymen piled out of their halftracks and rooted out the German soldiers hiding in basements. Few prisoners were taken, for the speedy advance allowed few halts.

T/5 R. C. Webb, 46th Inf., searched one house and found seven German officers preparing to sit down to a hot meal. Webb's squad hustled the officers off as PW's, dashed back to the house and enjoyed the hot food before the column pulled out.

"Bring Up The Engineers!"

Despite the Germans' disinclination to fight the tank column, any vehicle that wandered up a side road away from the main body was greeted enthusiastically by machine gun and bazooka fire.

Lead elements hit a snag when they found the road underpass under the Viersen–München-Gladbach railroad badly damaged and impassable. By 1430 a new route was found and the column rolled on through the village of Robend.

In a few minutes the column was roaring down the main road from Viersen to Anrath. The bridge over the Niers Canal could be seen far ahead, still intact. Lt. Marvin Orgill, B Co., 34th, raced toward it with his point platoon. Shooting as it rolled, the column thundered faster and faster toward the bridge. Orgill was pounding his medium tank 20 miles an hour and was only 100 yards away from the bridge when the explosion came. The Germans had blown the bridge in his face.

"Bring up the engineers," yelled Orgill over the radio, and before the officer could climb from his tank, Capt. Thomas Grose, commander of A Co., 22nd engineers, skidded up in a peep. He and Col. Burton quickly examined the bridge, found that one lane had been destroyed and the other was too weak to carry tanks. Already B Co. infantrymen, lugging machine guns and mortars, were scrambling across the blown bridge and fanning out on the other side to set up a hasty bridgehead.

Enemy soldiers milled around in confusion in the distance. Many disappeared into a large barn 1000 yards away from the bridge. T/Sgt. Claude Newton zeroed his mortars on the barn. His third round blew up both the barn and the congregating Germans.

"Move off the road and let the bridge trucks pass," came the call on the radio, and the heavy bridging equipment lumbered by the column, headed for the canal bank.

As the heavy engineer trucks rolled up, Sgt. Mike Woitow began to inspect the damaged span. Since the bridge was only partially demolished, he reasoned that only a portion of the demolition charge had exploded. Deep inside a concrete culvert Sgt. Woitow found a 100-pound live charge. He wriggled his way through the narrow opening and into the culvert. Lying flat in the narrow, cramped space, his arms stretched out ahead of him, Sgt. Woitow began the delicate job of disarming the charge. The men watched breathlessly from the bank until, at last, they saw Woitow inch his way out of the culvert and exhibit the detached fuse.

The engineers went to work, laboring furiously to speed the repair of the bridge. One hour and five minutes later, the span strengthened with 48 feet of treadway bridge, the engineers waved on the tanks and halftracks. The married C Cos. spurted across, pushing toward Anrath four miles away.

Road Blocks Pay Off

Tank machine guns chattered, tank guns boomed as the command cut a swath to Anrath. At 2000 the C Co. tanks and infantry poured into the town, fanned out to cover the town like a blanket. Again speed had paid off. The enemy was completely surprised and three gun crews were captured in their billets before they could man their guns. In many houses lights burned brightly, radios played and hot bread baked in the ovens.

Strong roadblocks were set up immediately on roads leading into Anrath. At one outpost Sgt. Dale Jeanneret snuggled his tank up against a building, pointed his long 76 mm. gun down a straight stretch of road and waited for Germans. Almost immediately a German army truck rumbled down the road toward him. Five hundred yards away the truck slowed down, started to creep toward the town. Jeanneret couldn't see the truck in the darkness, but he heard it coming closer and closer. Now it was 400 yards away, now 300, 200, 100 — and Jeanneret picked up the truck's dim outline in his sight. Fifty yards away the German suddenly saw the tank, turned his truck to flee. Jeanneret took his time, carefully placed his sight reticle on the truck's cab, squeezed his 76 trigger. The gun roared, blast flames from the 76 lighted up the buildings, and the truck exploded as the round struck. Jeanneret played his machine gun around the burning truck to pick up survivors, then relaxed in his seat as he watched the German truck burn.

Roadblocks were an old story to Jeanneret, for he had received the Distinguished Service Cross for knocking out three German tanks by himself on another roadblock back in France.

The companies in town kept busy until 0400, manning roadblocks and cleaning out German soldiers hiding in basements. Lt. Champ Montgomery, on outpost with his B Co., 46th Inf., platoon, saw four Germans with bazookas, riding bicycles up the road into town. He nailed all four with his M—1 before they could dismount. A German dispatch rider came into Anrath on a motorcycle, meekly gave up a valuable map showing dispositions of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Div. and the 2nd Parachute Div., the German forces defending Krefeld.

Throughout the night the Germans continued to pour into the town, not knowing it was in American hands. All were killed or captured by the roadblocks. The enemy had been building up his forces from Krefeld to Anrath, but CC A's quick capture of Anrath disrupted German plans for defenses along the Niers Canal.

On To The Rhine

Early next morning, April 2, Task Force Burton jumped off with the married C Cos. leading, headed straight for the Rhine. Just outside Anrath the leading platoon caught heavy anti-tank fire and artillery from woods northeast of the town. Three halftracks and one peep were quickly lost and the column halted briefly. Capt. Claude E. Cason lost his halftrack and peep and had to rely on hand signals for communication.

P—47's wheeling overhead were brought in to strafe and bomb the woods and CC A artillery pounded the area as soon as the planes cleared. The 3rd Platoons of the C Cos. took over the lead and continued the attack.

The P—47's and artillery effectively neutralized fire from the troublesome woods, but sporadic fire was received along the column until the area was cleaned by the 120nd Inf. Div. at noon. A later reconnaissance showed twelve 20 mm. guns and six 122 mm. howitzers emplaced in the woods.

Married C Cos. continued leading, working over all possible enemy positions with machine gun and tank fire. Capt. William Blakely's command tank of C Co., 34th, was hit four times with high explosive during the drive, but kept rolling. At 1130 there came a change of orders and the married C Cos. pulled off the road at the crossroads just west of the great Krefeld Steel Works. CC A's axis of advance was changed from north of Krefeld to south of the city.

In the afternoon, C Cos. pulled back on the road and continued the attack, moving south and east to avoid the steel works. The column slammed through Votzhofe and Hoxhofe. Just beyond Hoxhofe, Lt. Robert Brown, who was riding at the point, and Capt. Blakely both spotted a long tank column advancing toward them on a road to their right. Capt. Blakely immediately deployed his company to attack the column; then waited. As the column came nearer, it proved to be a combat command of the 2nd Armd. Div. which had been driving up from the south. Both armored divisions were ahead of schedule and the meeting came unexpectedly.

Late in the afternoon Task Force Burton moved into Fischeln to relieve the 2nd Armd. Div. Capt. Blakely's luck ran out for the day and his Sherman was knocked out by a German tank which was firing at a range of 2000 yards from the suburbs of Krefeld.

In Fischeln, more than 8000 German civilians and soldiers had packed themselves into a modern air raid shelter to escape the battle. The shelter was hopelessly overcrowded, but they had entered the shelter voluntarily, so the combat command posted a guard and saw that they remained there. All during the night CC A manned strong roadblocks on roads leading into Krefeld.

End Of The Fight

Next day Capt. Thomas Ryan, Sgt. Steven Mainczyk and Lt. Edouard Tresca from the division's CIC detachment and T/5 Lester Kraft from CC A started out to post "Off Limits" signs on the huge Krefeld Steel Works. They found they were the first Americans to enter the mill. Although they were fired on as they entered the plant, they rounded up 14 German prisoners and liberated 1500 hysterically happy slave workers. The steel mill, one of the largest in Germany, employed 4000 persons at peak production, making turret and heavy castings for Tiger tanks.

CC A remained south of Krefeld on the morning of March 3, prepared to assist the 102nd Division. During the afternoon and evening the combat command moved to St. Hubert, where they searched the town and rounded up weapons and prisoners. Task Force Jones occupied the towns of Tonisberg, Vluyn and Schaephuysen and also conducted searches.

The married A Cos. were sent on a hurry-up reinforcement mission to CC R, now fighting on the Rhine River at Orsoy. CC R, however, had smashed most of the resistance and needed little help to polish off the fast-crumbling German defenses west of the Rhine. The A Cos. returned to CC A on March 8.

COMBAT COMMAND R

CC R entered the fight east of the Roer River on March 3, when it was ordered to cut communications north of the Moers-Rheinberg area in a drive to the Rhine River.

The combat command was assembled at Rheindahlen. It had crossed the Roer Feb. 26 and 27, taking up positions near Hottorf to protect the XIII Corps right flank behind CC B. On March 1 the command had moved up to Rheindahlen to prepare for the mission.

The married B Cos. of the 10th Tank and 47th Inf. Bns., led by Col. Boyer, were to cross the Niers Canal at Oedt, move through Kempen and Huls and northeast to the Rhine. The married companies moved out at 1250 on March 3, with C Co., 22nd Engineers; two platoons of the 628th Tank Destroyers, and a platoon of D Co., 10th, light tanks.

A platoon of C Troop, 85th Recon, moved out ahead to look for bridges over the Niers Canal when the span on the main road between Greath and Kempen was found impassable. One damaged bridge was found.

T/4 Charles Winslow and his bulldozer of C Co., 22nd Engineers, doubled the column, roared past the tanks and halftracks to the canal. When forward elements reached the bridge, Winslow had it ready for use. The column lumbered across the bridge at 1330, passed through the 84th Inf. Div. at Huls and plunged forward, driving 17 miles in a half hour before the column ran into road craters. Dug-in infantry opened fire as the tanks and halftracks rolled to a stop. Lt. Ernest Sauer's Sherman picked off a self-propelled gun that threatened the halted column.

Once again Winslow raced his bulldozer up to the head of the column, with the light tanks of D Co. clearing the way. While the "little Dog" tanks covered him, his 'dozer churned back and forth, pushing earth into the craters. The road repaired, the tanks and halftracks roared on.

Infantry Assault Hill

At 1600, Task Force Boyer met its first stiff resistance where the road entered a deep cut. Atop a 100-foot hill overlooking the cut, dug-in enemy had prepared to stem the armored advance. While the Shermans blasted at the German 37 mm. guns, machine gun nests and infantry positions, the B Co. infantrymen poured out of their halftracks and assaulted the hill, covered by the tankers' fire. The infantrymen took 50 prisoners and killed the rest of the enemy force, crushing the resistance.

Engines roared as the armored column moved out again. Half an hour later the tanks and halftracks blasted through Tonisburg. Northeast of the town the enemy had blown craters in the road along the edge of a wooded area. The armored column turned right on a secondary road, attempted to attack toward the woods across a field in platoon line. Three tanks bogged down, but were recovered. As the tanks moved through the area, S/Sgt. Robert Graham, later commissioned a lieutenant, spotted a German vehicle in the woods and nailed it with his tank gun.

Out on the main road again, Col. Boyer's task force lunged forward so fast that it began overtaking fleeing German columns. Outside of Moers the B Cos. were stopped by tank ditches and anti-tank fire. Lt. Cullin's tank was destroyed. Sgt. Graham took command of the leading tank platoon and continued the fight.

Resistance became so strong that a halt was called for the night, and CC R stopped at Neukircherfeld and set up defensive positions. Houses and basements, full of enemy troops, were mopped up until late that night. Twenty-six prisoners were taken in the 95th Artillery battery positions alone. The enemy was active throughout the night, and the troops received small arms, mortar and artillery fire.

That night Col. Anderson sent C Troop of the 85th Recon out on a troop mission to probe enemy positions. They met resistance on every route, and determined that the enemy had established himself along the Moers-Utfort-Repelen-Lintfort road.

On the morning of March 4, Col. Hamberg's task force moved out. It consisted of the married A and C Cos., supported by the 2nd Platoon of C Co., 628th Tank Destroyers, and the Armored Platoon of C Co., 22nd Engineers. Their mission was to pass through Task Force Boyer, thrust rapidly to Repelen and pave the way for the push to the Rhine by seizing and holding road nets to cut enemy escape routes. The married B Cos. of Task Force Boyer went into CC R reserve.

Under heavy enemy fire, Task Force Hamberg lashed out from Moers, the married A Cos. leading. An hour later the armored column ran into artillery, bazooka and small arms fire at Sandfort. S/Sgt. William Twilley, in the lead tank, sent 75 mm. high explosive shells crashing into houses along the road as he approached the town.

In the woods to his right Twilley suddenly spotted a group of Germans. He reported them over his radio. "Move out," came the order, and he started into town. A German self-propelled 75 mm. gun was emplaced by a house to the right of the road. Its crew, unable to get to the gun in time, had hidden in the basement.

As Twilley prepared to blast the enemy gun, a bazooka shell hit his tank. The crew bailed out. German infantrymen jumped from foxholes and rushed the crew. Sgt. Twilley eluded them and made his way to the rear, but his assistant driver, Pfc. William Payne, was wounded and was taken prisoner by the Germans. They took him to the basement of a nearby house.

Captured Tanker Is Liberated

Leading a force of 47th infantrymen, Twilley returned, recaptured his wounded assistant driver, and helped him back to the medical aid men. Cpl. William P. Fuller cleared out the remaining bazookamen with his carbine. S/Sgt. Louis J Ahlin destroyed the 75 mm. gun with a grenade.

The tankers and infantrymen worked through the town with practiced skill, the tanks blasting the houses, the infantrymen digging the enemy out of the cellars. An air raid shelter at the far edge of town yielded many prisoners. An hour later, after taking 200 prisoners, the combat command again headed for Repelen.

Houses lined the road to Repelen, and there were fire trenches at close intervals. The column crawled as the infantrymen walked by the tanks, cleaning bazookamen out of the foxholes and digging Germans out of basements. It was a house-to-house fight all the way. German artillery began to fall on the column, causing casualties among the infantrymen.

While the married A Cos. worked through Repelen, driving out enemy artillery and cleaning the remaining infantrymen from houses, the married C Cos. moved out at noon, pushing up along the right flank to cut the Moers-Rheinkamp road. There they set up roadblocks for the night.

The following morning, March 5, the C Cos. pushed up the road to Rheinkamp and seized the key highway junction leading from Repelen to Orsoy, the Rhine town four miles to the east. Their mission was to hold the crossroad open for CC R forces driving up from Repelen toward Orsoy.

As the C Cos. waited, a column of men and vehicles appeared, moving toward their roadblock. Believing it to be the CC R column, Lt. Donald Deeter took the 3rd Platoons up the road to meet the approaching force. The platoons were met with a storm of enemy fire. The column was German. Lt. Deeter's tank was hit 11 times by shells from an emplaced anti-tank gun 700 yeards away. An infantry halftrack was destroyed. The 3rd Platoons halted. As the enemy prepared to attack, the platoon moved back to its roadblock positions and beat off the assault.

The married B Cos. of Col. Boyer's task force took the lead that morning. The tanks and halftracks roared out of Repelen at 0845 and began rolling toward their objective: the Rhine. The married A Cos. of 34th Tanks and 46th Inf., attached from CC A, came up behind, ready to help if the Germans defending the Rhine should prove tough.

But there was little opposition as the tanks pushed forward, moving faster and faster. The column thundered past the road junction held by the C Cos. and roared over the open country, racing 30 miles an hour toward Germany's greatest river. The tanks and halftracks moved so fast that surprised enemy crews were unable to get their guns into action until after the leading elements had passed, and the attached A Cos. from CC A, bringing up the rear, received more fire than did the B Cos. out in front.

The B Cos. plunged into Orsoy at 1040, just as a column of 15 German vehicles rolled down a converging road on the left flank, heading toward the Rhine ferry. But the Germans missed the boat. Tank guns blasted the enemy column and the tanks and halftracks ground on into the town.

Near the river the leading companies fanned out. The 1st Platoons swung to the left, the 2nd Platoons turned right and the 3rd Platoons headed straight for the river.

Lt. Summerfield brought his 1st Platoon tanks up to an exposed position overlooking the ferry slip. There he caught 35 trucks and 15 sedans, parked bumper to bumper, and two batteries of horsedrawn field artillery pieces, all crowded in the small area, waiting for the ferry. The tank gunners had a field day.

Four self-propelled German guns, moving down from the north, opened up on the platoons. Sgt. Arthur Horswill's tank knocked out two of them; the others were smashed by artillery. German soldiers trapped at the ferry rushed to surrender. Only those who had dug in between the levee and the river kept up the fight. Lt. Edward Muyskens and his infantry platoon began to rout them out. Sgt. Clifford C. Kuntz, his infantry halftrack placed so he could fire over the levee, spattered the enemy positions with his machine gun until he was wounded by a bazooka round.

The 2nd Platoons, moving south along the river, flushed out the remaining Germans in the other half of the town. Sgt. Robert E. Roland ran his 105 mm. assault gun up on top of the levee to knock out a troublesome anti-tank gun firing from across the Rhine.

Meanwhile the 3rd Platoons pushed straight toward the river until they hit heavy enemy fire. The leading tank and halftrack were hit. The others moved to the cover of buildings, then called for the artillery. Shells from the 95th Artillery blasted the waterfront positions.

Orsoy Yields 300 Prisoners

The bank of the Rhine cleared, the forces set about cleaning out the town. C Troop of the 85th Recon moved in and helped dig out the remaining trapped Germans. The bag at Orsoy totaled 300 prisoners. Twenty empty barges and others loaded with military equipment were captured.

Orsoy mopped up, CC R established roadblocks to catch anything being flushed out by friendly units moving in from the west. The B Cos. set up their positions on the northern edge of Orsoy; the A Cos. of the 34th Tank and 46th Inf. blocked to the north along the Rheinkamp-Orsoy road. The rest of the day was spent in shooting up enemy troops as they streamed toward Orsoy, hoping to escape across the ferry and unaware that the town was in American hands.

Meanwhile the marred A and C Cos. attacked north of the corps boundary against anti-tank guns and light infantry and artillery fire, linking up with reconaissance elements of the 8th Armd. Div. Several enemy planes were shot down during the drive.

The next day, March 6, the 95th Artillery moved up. Resistance within range of their guns on the west side of the Rhine had ended, and they took up new positions from which they could plaster the enemy across the river. March 12 the artillerymen moved again to Lank-Latum, 2000 yards from the Rhine, and continued to rain shells on the enemy despite counter-battery fire which caused casualties among the 95th men.

The tankers, infantry and reconnaissance men holding Orsoy were relieved by March 10 and went to St. Tonis where they settled down to the routine job of policing the area, maintaining roadblocks and preparing for the final major drive through Germany.

BREAKTHROUGH to the ELBE

The 5th Armored's fight from the Rhine to the Elbe is described by tacticians as "exploiting the enemy's rear zones after breaching his frontal positions." The men in the division have a simpler name for it — "rat race." In the Rhine to Elbe rat race the division fought the kind of war it knew best. It was like France all over again, except that white surrender flags flew from the German houses instead of the French Tricolor.

No one slept, no one ate, no one did anything but attack and push on, attack and push on. The tanks and halftracks kept running off their maps as the division spearheaded 260 miles into enemy territory in 13 days. The division ran wild in the German rear areas, isolating great cities, paralyzing communications and overrunning defensive positions before the enemy could man them. Before the division stopped rolling it had reached the Elbe at three points, and was only 45 miles from Berlin. No other American unit fought that close to the German capital.

Crossing the Rhine, CC B and CC R raced abreast to the Weser River, while CC A fought large groups of by-passed Germans in the rear areas.

Across the Weser CC R headed for the Elbe and reached the river in the northern half of the division zone. At Peine, CC A shot to the southern half of the division zone and hit the Elbe at Tangermünde, CC B followed to reach the Elbe at a third point between CC A and CC R.

COMBAT COMMAND R

On March 31 CC R roared across the Rhine at Wesel and started their smash to the Elbe. Sometimes the column crept, sometimes it slammed down the good German highways at 30 miles an hour, but always it kept pushing. CC R ran wild in the German rear areas like blind dogs in a meat house, and 13 days after they started their drive the German army west of the Elbe was beaten and disorganized and the war was almost over.

First element of CC R to cross the Rhine was a billeting party. Major Rufus M. Wallace was wounded when the party ran into prepared German defenses and was ambushed. Capt. Basquez's C Troop, 85th Recon, raced toward Senden to stake a claim on a bridge over the Dortmund–Ems Canal. Just short of Senden, Lt. Eastman's 2nd Platoon, which was following the 1st Platoon and Company Headquarters, ran into real trouble. Concealed Germans let the first elements pass, and then opened up on the 2nd Platoon with 20 mm. flak guns, bazookas and small arms. Cpl. Lawrence Sebelius' assault gun roared at the Germans, his gunner, Pvt. John Klinowski, firing as fast as he could. Sebelius went forward under fire to drag back trapped members of the scout section whose vehicles had been hit.

The recon men radioed back information on the enemy and Task Force Boyer moved south to clean out the trouble and then to secure the assembly area, which lay less than two miles south of Munster. Task Force Hamberg shot tanks and halftracks due east, planning to come into the assembly area from the west.

Married platoons commanded by Lt. Flower and T/Sgt. Glen Cook led the way for B Cos. as Col. Boyer's force marched on the assembly area. The column thundered down a road paralleling the Dortmund–Ems Canal. Lt. Flower's gunner, Cpl. Percy Thunder, spotted German flak gun positions across the canal. Grinding his turret to the right, he knocked out the positions and machine gunned German infantry in the same area.

Lead Tanks KO'ed

The married B Cos. were 1000 yards short of a crossroads in the middle of their assembly area by 1500. As the column pounded toward the intersection, two tanks and a halftrack in the lead suddenly burst into flames. Mark V tanks and self-propelled guns guarding the crossroads, waiting in concealed positions, had destroyed the three vehicles before B Co. could fire a shot. Lt. Flower was blown out of his turret. Sgt. Cook's halftrack and the second tank, commanded by Sgt. Anthony D. Belletiere, were destroyed.

The road was dotted with buildings, and the buildings were full of Germans who were there to guard the crossroads. Sgt. Cook stayed forward, organized his shaken platoon and started killing and capturing German soldiers in the buildings. Soon more than 50 prisoners were started toward the rear.

Sgt. William A. Skalsky and Sgt. William D. Hardie jammed their tanks against the buildings for protection and traded shots with the German tanks. Between them they knocked out one, drove the others away. The married 3rd Platoons had deployed to the left, the 1st Platoons to the right, and they held positions there. By now it was almost dark and Col. Boyer's force stayed in position for the night.

Meanwhile, Col. Hamberg had cleaned out Appelhulsen and turned south. Capt. Marcikowski's C Co., 47th Inf., received orders at 2100 to move across the Dortmund–Ems Canal in the vicinity of Senden and to hold a bridgehead to protect the engineers who were going to throw a bridge across the canal later that night. There was only one trouble with the orders: They failed to tell C Co. how it was to cross, and there were no bridges. S/Sgt. Bernard Gallagher and Pfc. Israel Stern helped solve the problem by working their way down the dark bank of the canal until they found some two-man boats which they brought back. Lt. Kenneth Webster's 2nd Platoon rowed silently across the canal, dug in a perimeter defense on the other side.

At 0400 Capt. Perlman's C Co., 22nd Engineers, started laying treadway, working swiftly and silently without lights in the black night. Four hours later they had bridged the canal with 300 feet of treadway and the 1st Platoon of C Troop, 85th Recon, rolled across, leading the combat command. The married 1st Platoon of the A Cos. followed closely behind, Lt. William Johnson in the lead tank.

Task Force Hamberg ticked off 40 miles to reach Greffen before dark. Near there Lt. Michael Livingston and his 10th Tank Bn. Reconnaissance Platoon caught enemy soldiers tearing planking off a bridge. The platoon opened fire, killing one German, capturing seven and saving the bridge.

The infantry companies and C Troop, 85th, probed the Ems Canal for bridges suitable for the tanks to cross. The troop finally found a bridge which was later used.

By 1600, A Co., 47th, had pushed into Greffen and was cleaning out the town. Greffen netted 20 prisoners. Later the A Co. tanks moved into the town.

Next morning, April 2, all of CC R crossed the Ems Canal. The married C Cos. pushed through the A Cos. and moved on to a bridge over a small stream 1000 yards west of Harswinkel. Here a booby-trapped roadblock, guarded by two machine guns, stopped the column briefly. Tank guns rained high explosive on the German machine guns, the blocks were knocked out of the way, and the column poured into Harswinkel. The town was thick with white surrender flags.

Lt. Deeter's 1st Platoon was leading as the column pushed on through town. Suddenly a German bazooka player stuck his bazooka out the window of a house flying a white flag and fired at Deeter's tank, knocking it out. Infantrymen leaped out of their halftracks, headed for the houses. Col. Hamberg and Capt. McAuley joined in the hunt for the bazookamen. Two were found by the infantrymen. Germans buried them later in the town.

Col. Hamberg's force punched on toward Halle. Outside the city the tankers and infantrymen took 20 SS prisoners, wounded others. Sgt. Laurence Detzel's tank picked up a German gas truck loaded with infantry on top, going up a side road. His first round of high explosive blew the truck and the Germans sky-high.

Road Block Halts Column

The column slammed through Halle, but was stopped 1000 yards outside the town by another roadblock. Lt. Kleinsteiber nosed his tank up against the concrete drum, gave it a push, sent it crashing down the mountain side.

The maps showed the road to be a deep, winding cut through the mountains for the next few miles — perfect defensive positions. Speed was beginning to pay dividends, for the pass was undefended. The column roared on to Werther. Going through the town, Lt. Kleinsteiber's lead tank was bazooked from a building above the road. Lt. Kleinsteiber was instantly killed. Again the infantrymen scrambled out of their halftracks, charged up the incline to the house, and dug out the bazookamen. Tank guns pounded the houses to bits as the column rolled out of town.

Sgt. Dwight Phillips took over the leading platoon in his tank, and for the remainder of the day led a charmed life. Lt. Webster had been wounded in Halle, and T/Sgt. Reece Thornton now led the leading infantry platoon.

The column raced toward Jollenbeck. As Phillip's lead tank entered the town, four bazooka rounds in quick succession were fired at him. Two exploded against trees lining the road, another whizzed by, inches from the tank — a miss. The fourth hit the tank and dropped on the road — a dud. Thirty German infantrymen and bazookamen fought a short, losing battle to hold the town. Tanks rolled up to houses, fired at point blank range, and C Co. infantrymen dug scared German soldiers from basements and outhouses.

The town cleared, Col. Hamberg pushed his tanks and tracks toward Herford, a large city standing squarely in the command's path. The tanks picked up

speed, charged toward the city. On the way, 30 German bicycle troops were overtaken. Somsurrendered, others tried to escape up a hillside to the right flank. Tank machine gunners and riflemen slaughtered them as they climbed the hill.

On the outskirts of Herford, Sgt. Phillips' tank was hit by a 37 mm. anti-tank gun, but was not damaged. Phillips' gunner slammed high explosive at the German position, destroying it. The sergeant picked up the microphone to report the destruction of the gun, but his first word was cut off when another German anti-tank gun, this time a 75, hit his tank and knocked it out. Phillips bailed out, but refused to be evacuated. Instead he jumped into another tank and continued to fight.

Col. Hamberg and Capt. McAuley, who had been forward in their peeps with the lead platoon, hit the ditch when the guns opened fire. Other tanks in the platoon had pulled up against buildings when the firing started, trying to locate the enemy guns. Col. Hamberg and Capt. McAuley spotted the German gun off to the right flank, just as a tank which had been shielded by a building started backing up into the anti-tank gun's field of fire. Both officers jumped out of the ditch, waving their arms to signal the tank commander not to move his tank. But it was too late. The tank, as it pulled out from the shelter of the building, was immediately hit. The crew bailed out and crawled into the ditch with Hamberg and McAuley.

The mortars had gone into position as soon as the trouble started, and when the enemy guns were located, they began firing, but couldn't register a hit. The 95th Artillery was also called in and drove away the gun crews. Lt. William Wineman's 1st Platoon of infantry went down, cleaned out the gun crews and destroyed the guns with hand grenades.

Meanwhile, Col. Boyer had sent Lt. Muyskens and Lt. Thomas F. Zschokke, with their married platoons from the B Cos., together with Lt. Martin's tank destroyer platoon, to cut the Bielefeld—Herford road. Reaching the road, the platoons set up strong roadblocks and during the night shot up six trucks and took 30 prisoners.

Artillery Pounds Herford

CC R stayed in those positions while the 95th Artillery pounded away at Herford all night. Shelling the town was a trick, leading the Germans to believe that the town was going to be attacked in the morning. They were out-foxed by Col. Anderson. Big towns were not in CC R's plans as the command pushed off early on April 3. Col. Anderson had more important things than cities to think of that day; he wanted a bridge over the Weser, and wanted it badly.

German soldiers waited in Herford for an assault that never came. Col. Anderson flung both his task forces toward the city, split them just before they hit the city limits, looped Task Force Hamberg to the left, Task Force Boyer to the right, neatly encircled and cut off the town. The two columns rolled toward the Weser and the vital bridges.

The married B Cos. led by Capt. Pool and Capt. Lewis spurted for the Autobahn east of Herford, made it and raced down the rolling concrete ribbon toward the bridge. Lt. Karda's platoon of the 85th Recon C Troop sped ahead to check on the last bridge on the Autobahn before the Weser. He found the bridge intact, wheeled around, rushed back with the good news. A few moments later a C Troop, 85th, scout section screamed to a halt before the leading tanks, reported to Lt. Cullin and Lt. Martin, who were working their tanks and tank destroyers abreast on the highway, that a German tank and assault gun were waiting in an underpass to ambush the column. Martin and Cullin slowed down, eased their tank and tank destroyer just barely over the crest of a hill and spotted the German guns. At 1800 yards Cullin's gunner, Cpl. Francis Haslin, blew up the assault gun and Martin's tank destroyer smashed the German tank.

Col. Boyer's married B Cos. sailed down the broad highway. Sgt. Lucien Thaxton brought his tank up even with the other tank and tank destroyer. Now three vehicles abreast, two tanks and a tank destroyer, headed the column.

Meanwhile, Col. Hamberg's force was pushing down to the Autobahn to meet the married B Cos. They by-passed Herford to the left, headed for the super-highway.

The leading platoon caught a few rounds of high velocity fire, coming from the right flank. Capt. Pool was moving up from the right flank. Two and two made four. Capt. Whitley grabbed his microphone.

"Hey, Frank. This is Whitley. Damnit, you're firing at my tanks."

Pool came on the radio. "Hold everything. I'll check," he said. He punched a button, went on his company radio channel, called his lead tank. "What are you firing at up there?" he asked.

"Not firing at anything," came Lt. Cullin's prompt reply. "Can't see anything to shoot at."

Back on the battalion radio channel, Pool called Whitley. "You're nuts," he said. "We're not firing at you. Must be Germans."

88's Again

"Roger, out," snapped Whitley, for by now another call was coming in to clear up the mystery. "Found the bastards," Lt. William Johnson, who had the last platoon in column, was shouting over the radio. "It's a slug of 88's way up on a hill to our right. They're shooting at our platoon."

"Coming back!" yelled Whitley as he spun his peep around and headed for the trouble. Picking up Capt. Wersma, he raced back to Lt. Johnson's platoon. Going back, he bawled instructions over the radio. "Tell the forward observer to get artillery on that hill. Put the assault guns on it. Lay in the mortars. Everybody shoot at it until I tell you to stop."

Reaching Johnson's platoon, Whitley and Wersma laid quick plans for the attack. The 88's were on a high hill looking down on the road. They were dug in and hard to see. The assault on the hill started with tanks and infantry charging up together, the tanks blasting away with their big tank guns and the infantry using marching fire.

Artillery, mortars and assault guns pounded the hill as the tankers and infantrymen pushed forward. Whitley didn't lift the supporting fire until the leading elements were only 40 yards away from the bursts. Now the men could see what had caused the touble. Ten 88's, not the usual two or three, were dug in on the hill. The heavy fire on the hill had kept the gun crews down, but as soon as it lifted they came up firing. Lt. Neal Franks was killed in the assault. Lt. Johnson's tank was hit by a bazooka and he was wounded. Whitley's peep had been struck and he was walking beside Johnson's tank. He climbed in the turret, took Johnson's place. The attack continued.

Cpl. Clifford Poindexter, gunner in Sgt. Willis Yates' tank, lined his 76 on the first German 88, fired, scored a direct hit. He traversed his turret, fired again. Again and again he fired, and his gun blew up eight of the ten 88's. The tanks and infantry were on top of the positions now. The infantrymen charged toward the fire trenches and dug out the stunned Germans. The artillery and other support fire had been right on the button, and many of the Germans had been killed in their trenches.

Sgt. Clayton Pittsinger had led his machine gun squad to the left flank to provide flank protection during the attack, and killed 20 Germans who were trying to escape. The battle for "88 Hill" was over.

While the A Cos. were fighting on the hill, the married B's were still pounding down the Autobahn, headed for a bridge. Lt. Flower and Sgt. Cook took the lead for the rest of the run. Faster and faster the tanks and halftracks rolled. The bridge was only 1200 yards away now, intact and glistening in the afternoon sun. The tanks were a bare 1000 yards from the bridge when suddenly there was a dull boom, the bridge girders snapped and fell into grotesque positions. The Germans had blown the bridge. Col. Boyer recalled his companies.

The morning of April 4 Col. Anderson still hadn't given up hope for a bridge. He shot Task Force Hamberg through the B Cos. at Exeter. With the C Cos. leading, Col. Hamberg pushed to Hohenhausen, dropped C Cos. there to set up roadblocks and pushed on to Mollenbeck with the A Cos.

Storming and assaulting bridges had failed, so CC R tried another tack. Major Richard F. Wilkins, CC R S–2, accompanied by Lt. Enno R. Hobbing and Cpl. Paul

Krekow, passed through the lines into German-held Rinteln to negotiate for the bridge over the Weser there.

The German commander listened to their proposals, but arrangements had already been completed for destroying the bridge and it was blown while the envoys were in the town. Major Wilkins had planned to stay only a short time, but the Germans held him overnight on the pretext that the party had not been blindfolded when coming into the town and had seen the defenses.

Col. Anderson threatened to blow up the town if the party wasn't returned safely, and at 1045, after staying 20 hours in German territory, the party returned to CC R.

One more futile stab at taking a bridge by storm and speed was made April 5 by Task Force Boyer, which struck toward Hesslingen to grab the bridge there. This time the Germans didn't wait until the last minute. The Cub plane reported the bridge blown before the tanks came within two miles of it. The B Cos. again turned around, got out of the area in a hurry, for high velocity fire was coming in at them from across the Weser and they couldn't stop it.

Engineers Span Weser

Army engineers had built a bridge over the Weser, in the XIX corps zone at Hameln, and on April 8 Col. Anderson received orders to take his command across that bridge. C Troop, 85th, led the way across and was hardly out of sight of the bridge before it ran into a fight, south and west of Springe, last big town before Hannover. As the recon was destroying the resistance, a Cub plane from the 2nd Armd. Div. landed near Capt. Pool's tank. He had set down to tell the column that he had spotted German tanks and many German infantrymen in Springe, and that the road to Springe was blocked. The 95th Artillery doubled the column in a hurry to get in position to fire on the town and the roadblocks. Lt. Kettlehut went forward to a building from which he could observe. By now the Air Corps had reported in and P—47's began working over the town as CC R tore down the roadblocks leading into Springe.

The married B Cos. pounded into town after the planes had strafed and bombed and artillery had fired heavy concentrations. The three platoons swept into town, fanned out three ways. One platoon went up the center of Springe, one turned left and the third swung to the right. Prisoners were streaming out of houses and Germans were falling over themselves to give up. Col. Boyer called for help to handle the prisoners. By the time the companies arrived to take over, the B Cos. were mounted up and moving out of town. More than 300 prisoners were collected in Springe.

Three 88 mm. guns and their crews were taken by A Co. an hour after the B Cos. left the town. Sgt. Lewis Ahlin was leading a squad of A Co. on a search of the town when he peeped around a corner, saw the three guns, one with a gunner in the seat, ready to fire. Ahlin killed the gunner with one round from his M—1. That convinced the rest of the Germans. They all surrendered.

The night of April 8 the command stopped south of Pattensen, a bare eight miles from the great city of Hannover. On April 9 CC R planned to cut off Hannover and let it wither on the vine — and they did.

Task Force Boyer struck east and north on the morning of April 9, by-passed Pattensen and crossed the Leine River, with Lt. Zschokke's platoon leading. The column roared on almost to Wulferode when the fog that had blanketed the countryside all morning suddenly lifted. As the fog cleared, all hell broke loose on the column.

"I never saw such continuous heavy fire on a column before," said Capt. Pool. The fire was coming from the heavy flak gun positions around Hannover. Sgt. William Hurley moved his tank into position and knocked out one of the guns. The B Cos. pulled back in the protection of heavy woods to the rear.

The C Cos. were working a few thousand yards south on a different route, Lt. Leas in the lead tank trying hard to snatch a bridge over the Weser–Elbe Canal. The column forced through Mullingen after disposing of enemy bazookamen there with tank and rifle fire, then raced for the canal. Lt. Leas saw the bridge intact, and thought that for once the Germans were going to leave it that way. He got the front part of his tank on the bridge before the Germans blew it. He backed off safely. Three hundred Germans were dug in on the other side in strong positions. The tanks pulled back and blasted away.

C Co. infantrymen deployed behind the tanks, took pot shots across the canal with their rifles. Two C Co. doughboys, S/Sgt. William P. Cadieux and Pfc. John H. Niles, decided the only way to lick the Germans on the other side of the canal was to go after them. Crossing the demolished bridge on the run, they hit the far bank and ran to the nearest German foxhole. Cadieux pulled the pin on a grenade, dropped it in the foxhole and waited for results. Three Germans came out with their hands up. Going from hole to hole, he repeated the process until he ran out of grenades. From there on the Germans' imaginations brought them out with hands overhead. Cadieux and Niles recrossed the bridge with 25 German prisoners in front of them.

At the same time, a half mile downstream, Lt. Hanf and a patrol of eight men were reconnoitering for bridge crossings. Finding a bridge intact, Sgt. Robert Conner crossed under fire to check it and the opposite bank.

Objective Elbe

At 1600 April 9, Gen. Oliver came to Col. Anderson's command post and told him his mission was to drive as rapidly as possible to the Elbe River. At 1630 Task Force Hamberg headed for Peine, with the married C Cos. in the lead. Col. Hamberg ordered the married A Cos. to attack the town of Equord, which lay to the left of the main axis of advance, but had to be cleaned out. The married C's continued north to cut the Autobahn. A Co. attacked Equord with three platoons abreast in a company line formation, all guns firing. Enemy tanks had been reported in the town, and before the attack was over, four had been accounted for by the A Co., 10th, tank guns.

Cpl. Alvin Childress, gunner in Lt. Wagner's tank, knocked out the first German tank by firing down a street in Equord. He scored a hit, forcing the crew to abandon their tank. Two more were knocked out as they fled east toward Rosenthal and the fourth was caught in Rosenthal. One of the German tanks received 12 hits from Whitley's gunners. Another got 14 hits. None penetrated, but the crews were driven out by fear.

The married C Cos. drove on toward the Berlin–Hannover Autobahn, for if they could cut the Autobahn, the main trunk roads into Hannover would be in CC R hands. As the tanks by-passed Peine to the west, they saw a train, with steam up, in the railroad yards. The entire company plastered it with 76 mm. fire. The locomotive exploded. The companies pressed on to the Autobahn in total darkness. They reached it and Lt. Leas and Lt. Paul Bostic had their platoons set up two roadblocks. During the night wandering German infantrymen coming in from both directions were captured. They refused to believe American tanks were on the Autobahn until they were shown the positions.

During the night the burgermeister of Peine contacted the 10th Tank Bn. and told Col. Hamberg he wanted to surrender the town unconditionally. Next morning Capt. Daniel A. Grundmann, Military Government officer in CC R, went into the town, accepted the surrender, and ordered the streets cleared. When CC R rolled through, the town looked deserted and the shutters were drawn on all the buildings.

The morning of April 10 CC R headed north toward Edmisson, with the A Cos. leading. As the A Cos. approached the town they began to receive high velocity fire. Lt. Early's lead tank was knocked out. Lt. John P. Molnar's platoon deployed to the right and got two Panthers with the help of the Air Corps.

The Air Corps had come up to work over the town, and the tanks and infantry waited outside while P–47's bombed and strafed. After the planes had set part of the town burning, the 95th began shelling the ruins. As fire from the 95th slackened, the A

Cos. stormed into town, shooting as they rolled. Lt. Wagner and his platoon caught 15 German trucks pulling out of the town and burned them with tank fire. That night the command bivouacked in the vicinity of Mienersen.

April 11 Col. Anderson turned his forces east and struck out for the Elbe. By now the men were very tired. They had fought and ridden 16 hours a day for 11 days. It was only the thought that they were on the final road to victory – the road home – that kept them traveling at such a dizzy pace.

Lt. Max Eastman's 2nd Platoon, C Troop, 85th, raced ahead of the column to Gifhorn the morning of April 11. Most of the Germans were still in bed. They had no idea the Americans were within miles of the town. Gifhorn collapsed with little resistance. The town cleaned out and prisoners started toward the rear, the column roared on toward the Elbe. At Gassendorf Lt. William J. Caroscio helped collect 200 Hungarians wearing the uniform of the Wehrmacht. The Hungarians stumbled over themselves to be the first to give up.

At Gifhorn Col. Anderson split his forces and sent them in two different directions. Task Force Boyer headed straight east for the Elbe; Task Force Hamberg spearheaded to the north on a special "hurry up" mission. Near Wesendorf the married C Cos. overran a huge airport. The tanks shot up three planes on the ground, fired an ammunition dump, kept moving. Lt. George Shaw's Anti-Tank Platoon, C Co., 47th, caught some nebelwerfer fire from one flank,whipped their 57's around and picked them off.

While the rear of the column had been stopped by the nebelwerfers, the head of the column had pressed forward so that a two-mile gap lay between the two groups. Col. Anderson started down the two-mile stretch from the head of the column to give a change of orders to Col. Hamberg. While riding over an open stretch of ground in his peep, Col. Anderson was fired on by an anti-tank gun. The FM radio roared immediately. "Some bastard is shooting at me with an anti-tank gun – Somebody, anybody, come up here and get the sonufabitch!" The Assault Gun Platoon came on the air and told Col. Anderson they were in position to fire if he could adjust.

"Hell, yes, I can adjust," bellowed the colonel. "Start shooting!" The assault guns opened up and the colonel started adjusting their fire. "Fifty short. Fire for effect," he rasped. The rounds came in. "Fifty short. Fire for effect," he yelled again. "What's the adjustment, colonel?" the assault gun leader asked over the radio. "Fifty short. Fire for effect. You're really running those bastards out of the woods now! That'll teach 'em to snipe at me!" roared the colonel as the German gun crews were smashed.

Late in the afternoon orders were received cancelling the mission to the north. Col. Hamberg turned his column around and raced after Task Force Boyer. As Task Force Hamberg was fighting north, the married B Cos. led by Col. Boyer were heading due east and racing for the Elbe. C Troop, 85th, was in front and spotted enemy tanks in Westerbeck. The tank destroyer platoon laid down a base of fire and one German tank was burning in the town when the B Cos. thundered through at 25 miles an hour. Lt. Graham was in the lead tank. He punched the head of the column through Ehra, Boitzenhagen, Radenbeck and to Jubar. The speed of the drive was completely bewildering the Germans now. Many enemy trucks and supply columns were overtaken and left burning on the road and in the ditches by the tank and infantry guns. At Jubar Lt. Zschokke took over the lead tank and sailed on through Lundenson, Stockheim and into Rohrberg.

General Captured

At Rohrberg Capt. Lewis' company captured a German lieutenant general and his staff. The task force spent the night in Rohrberg and prisoners streamed into the PW cages all night.

At 0530 on April 12, Task Force Hamberg pulled into Rohrberg, having gone 34 hours without sleep. Soon the column was rolling again.

The married B Cos. led again, with Lt. Flower in the lead tank, all the way to Winterfield. Here the Ger-

mans barricaded themselves in a cemetery and tried to fight the tanks. Infantry closed in, assaulted them in the cemetery and smothered the opposition. The B Cos. slammed ahead to Mosinstein, Kallehne, Kerkau, Lohne, Koosebau, Bretsch and to Drusedau. Here they shot platoons out to set up roadblocks on the main Osterberg–Seehausen road.

At 1600 the same day, Col. Hamberg's force, which had been following, received orders to get to the Elbe and seize the main bridge at Wittenberge. The A Cos., married, led. Before night fell they had run into one of the hardest fights of the drive. The A's slammed through Seehausen, paused only long enough to check their directions, and then lunged toward the bridge, six and a half miles away. The Anti-Tank Platoon was left to mop up the town.

Lt. Molnar, Sgt. Henry White and Sgt. Jack Bastin rode the first three tanks in column as the tankers and infantry raced for the Elbe bridge. Roadblocks were thick the last two miles. Molnar pulled up before a roadblock, attached a cable to his tank and to the barricade, and heaved away. The huge, concrete-filled drum toppled into the ditch. Another roadblock a few hundred yards further on was torn down the same way. Then the Germans started to fight. A third roadblock was defended by a hundred SS men and bazookamen. They all opened up from foxholes at point blank range. One bazooka shell glanced off the turret of Molnar's tank, damaging the traversing mechanism.

Every gun cf the assaulting tanks shot at once. In Molnar's tank Pvt. Richard Vicknair loaded the 76, then jumped to the .50 caliber machine gun in his turret to spray the Germans. Molnar's gunner, Cpl. Elmer E. Hoffstetter, purposely shot short of the foxholes, sending projectiles into the dirt in front of the holes and down inside, killing the occupants. T/4 Charles Stoeckeln, Molnar's driver, was doing the work of three men in the front of the tank. He drove, leaned over to fire the assistant driver's machine gun, and handed up ammunition out of the spare racks to the men in the turret behind him.

In the deafening boom and rattle of the battle a telephone at the roadblock began ringing. It rang while infantry dismounted and killed 50 Germans remaining in their holes, and while the big guns roared at resistance on beyond the roadblock. Finally Pfc. William Austin jerked the phone off its hook and listened. A German officer was talking excitedly from Wittenberge and Austin yelled, "Blow it out your barracks bag! I'll be there in a minute!"

A Hand-to-Hand Fight

The fight turned into utter confusion and became a hand-to-hand personal fight. First Sgt. Helms, Sgt. Lewis Ahlin and S/Sgt. Jodie Vaughn fixed their bayonets and charged across a small canal to mop up Germans on the other side.

Sgt. Pittsinger took the machine gun and mortar squads along a railroad track which paralleled the road. The mortars under T/5 Perlie Bowman fired in extremely close support of the action.

Capt. Whitley, Sgt. Erwin Welti and S/Sgt. Chester Redding drove through the thick of the fight to the head of the column to bring up ammunition. Molnar's tank was firing so fast they couldn't keep him supplied. Molnar hopped out, jumped into the second tank, pressed home the attack. In his second tank Molnar shoved past the final roadblock and onward toward the bridge, but SS men began firing from a stone house beside the road.

"Blow it down!" the tank commander shouted.

The tanks opened up and cannon shells boomed through the stone walls. The tanks ploughed on past and turned to the right. The column roared along beside a high railroad embankment, and bazookas opened up from the opposite side. Machine guns sprayed the crest of the embankment. A bazookaman raised up to aim his bazooka, but before he could fire the tank machine guns got him and he lurched forward on his face.

The column kept ploughing on. Molnar's tank was a half mile from the bridge.

"Boom!"

The explosion roared above all the noise of the battle. Tankers and infantrymen looked forward. Boards and girders soared in the air, then dropped into the Elbe. A

cloud of powdered concrete rose slowly where the span had been. The last bridge over the Elbe that the division could hope to get had been blown. Col. Hamberg called his companies back to Seehausen. The battle for the Elbe was over.

The men in CC R didn't know it then, but their next, and last, battle was going to be toward the same river.

COMBAT COMMAND B

As Combat Command B approached Munster on the evening of March 31, it learned that the bivouac area it was supposed to occupy had not been cleared of enemy troops. The tanks and halftracks pulled off in the fields near Appelhulsen. From the assembly area near Anrath, in the Rhineland, the command had come more than 75 miles that day, crossing the Rhine on the ponton bridge at Wesel and swinging past the northern edge of the enemy troops still holding out in the Ruhr pocket. The spearheading drive south of Munster and east to the Weser River was to begin the following day, Easter Sunday.

A light rain fell on the oil-coated steel when the canvas covers were stripped from the machine guns on the tanks and halftracks the next morning. The ground was soft and vehicles had difficulty getting out of the fields and onto the hard-surfaced road. But at 1100 CC B's armor headed east into the German heartland. Leading the push was Task Force Anderson, supported by all of the mobile gun batteries of the 47th Artillery Bn.

The initial mission was to seize and secure a bridge across the Dortmund–Ems Canal to the south of Munster. This was necessary so that the entire combat command could cross the stream, by-pass and get to the east side of the defended city, and then with both task forces abreast, continue to drive east. On the right flank was CC R and on the left were the British 2nd Armored and the American 17th Airborne Div., which were pressing in from the west on Munster.

As the leading married C Cos. approached the canal they found their route across a creek blocked by a bridge that had been destroyed by demolitions. By the time a passable route had been located, however, an order came down for the task force to halt in place. CC R's engineers had been able to bridge the canal near Senden and it was decided to send CC B over this crossing. Task Force Dickenson was now ordered to proceed immediately to the ponton bridge and lead the command across to the east bank.

After it had cleared this water barrier during the afternoon, Task Force Dickenson, with the supporting batteries of the 71st right on its heels, picked up speed and roared unopposed down the highway. By 1900 that evening it had gone more than 23 miles and was entering the outskirts of Warendorf. On a bridge leading into the town, men in the lead vehicles pulled up six demolition charges before the Germans could set them off. From under the bridge they removed eight Teller mines.

When they started to reconnoiter to the southwest of the town, recon men of the 2nd Platoon of the 85th's B Troop, which had been leading the task force, were fired on by a German tank. The enemy shell ripped into the lead peep in which Pfc. Paul M. Vollette, acting scout sergeant, and two other men were riding. Shell fragments punctured two tires, tore a hole in the radiator and floor board, and slightly wounded one of the men.

"We bailed out of the vehicle and scrambled for cover," said the driver, Pfc. Howard D. White. "But later we crawled back, hopped in the peep and got the hell out of there."

As soon as B Troop's 1st Platoon had got across the Dortmund–Ems Canal, it was instructed by CC B's intelligence officer, Major Martin M. Philipsborn, to race north to the town of Telgte, which lies about six miles directly east of Munster. It was realized that the enemy troops in Munster would attempt to make this town a key in an escape route as soon they discovered they were being surrounded.

The platoon reached Telgte at 1900 and the German commander offered to surrender his Wehrmacht garrison of 200 men. Later in the evening about 200 enemy infantry supported by some tanks entered the town from the north and the Reconnaissance Platoon was forced to withdraw.

Task Force Dickenson Spearheads

Task Force Dickenson spent the night in Warendorf while Task Force Anderson coiled near Venne.

At daylight CC B's armor was back on the road again, rolling east in the rain. In the tanks and halftracks men rubbed the sleep from their eyes and took up their vigils, carefully watching to the front and to the flanks for any suspicious signs in the spring-green countryside, ready to counter any violent eruptions in these peaceful surroundings.

Task Force Dickenson continued to lead the command the second morning. As it pulled out of Warendorf, it received some fire from the left flank, but the column pushed on toward Sassenberg. Not far behind was CC B Headquaters. After pulling through a stretch of bad road early that morning, Task Force Anderson raced to catch up so that it would be able to knife north into its own zone of action as soon as Col. Cole gave the order.

On the Munster highway southwest of Warendorf a roadblock, consisting of two light tanks from the 81st's D Co., and a squad of A Co., 15th, infantrymen, was left behind by Task Force Dickenson to protect the left flank. This roadblock, which was in charge of Lt. Kenneth A. McLennon, later that day destroyed a German staff car and captured six enemy trucks, one colonel, six majors and 95 enlisted men.

As the head of the column pulled into Sassenberg at 1000, Lt. Shirley J. Duran, commander of the lead tank, saw a towed 88 mm. gun roll past a T-intersecfion. When a second 88 started to pass the same intersection, his tank opened up with its 75 and smashed the enemy gun. Then a German tank rumbled into town with guns roaring, but Lt. Duran and his crew knocked that out, too.

"Lt. Duran's tank was hit and two men in his crew were wounded by a shell from a second Kraut tank that came into town," said Sgt. Harold J. Strunk, commander of the second Sherman in the column. "We fired one round and knocked out the Kraut tank and around the corner we caught three enemy halftracks."

While Task Force Dickenson continued east from Sassenberg, Task Force Anderson swung north and then east into its own zone of action. It met no enemy resistance until it approached Versmold, where fire from an enemy self-propelled gun disabled the lead tank. The Germans then tried to withdraw their gun from the town, but when it bogged down in a creek they destroyed it.

As the armored columns slashed east, using secondary roads whenever possible because the Germans tended to concentrate their strongest resistance on the main roads, engineers of the 22nd's B Co. worked feverishly patching up bad spots in the routes so that the advance would not be delayed.

Supply trucks following the armor were often fired on by by-passed groups of resistance. Four gasoline trucks of the 3907th Quartermaster Truck Co., after stopping to pick up empty gas cans discarded by the tankers, were racing to catch up with CC B's column when they were sprayed with enemy machine guns from the side of the road.

"When I saw the windshield shatter in front of me, I left the vehicle and headed for the ditch," said T/5 John S. Reece, colored peep driver who was leading the convoy.

Just before he reached the ditch a bullet struck him, but did not wound him. It entered the right side of his raincoat, passed through his field jacket pocket, his wallet, fountain pen, sweater, shirt and undershirt. Then, after swinging around his stomach, it came out through his clothes again and into his left field jacket pocket where it stopped when it hit his GI razor.

After pushing past Greffen, Task Force Dickenson pulled up at dusk before the mountain pass at Borgholzhousen. The lead 81st A Co. tank, commanded by Lt. Carl W. Schwab, was hit three times by panzerfaust rockets.

"It was the sand bags that we had packed all over the tank before starting this drive that saved us from being killed," said the driver, T/5 Jess E. Arnett.

SS Hold Mountain Pass

Because the pass was of vital strategic importance, it was decided to press forward in a night attack against the 200 SS men who where defending the corridor with panzerfausts and small arms. After winching several of the big guns out of the mud holes in their former positions near Horste, the 71st batteries went into new positions after dark southwest of Bergholzhausen and proceeded to blast the bazookamen out the pass. By 0700 the next morning Task Force Dickenson was completely through the mountain barrier and two miles beyond the town of Borgholzhousen, rolling east.

Down out of the woods came more than 3000 foreign slave workers to greet the tankers and infantrymen. One company of Yugoslavian workers stood at attention alongside the road and saluted each vehicle as it passed.

During the night Pfc. Marshal R. Ross and two other men from the 1st Platoon of the 85th's B Troop had set out in a peep in an attempt to make contact with Task Force Anderson to the north. In the darkness they ran smack into an enemy roadblock.

From both sides of the road the enemy troops turned machine guns on the vehicle. But the recon men gunned the peep, sprayed the Germans with their own .30 caliber machine gun and drove through the block. The two men with Pfc. Ross were wounded and the peep was badly shot up.

"When we were a thousand yards on the other side of the block," said Ross, "we tore out the radio, abandoned the vehicle, and on foot circled around the enemy troops to get back to our outfit."

After following Task Force Dickenson through the pass, Task Force Anderson turned north again into their own zone of action. They overran ack-ack positions and captured prisoners, but encountered no serious opposition. About 1200 Lt. Leonard Keene of the 81st's B Co. saw a freight train steaming toward his lead tank as the column knifed east. He fired three shots and then, as the train swung off on a spur, fired three more shots and exploded the locomotive.

"I saw another train coming toward us, a passenger train," said Sgt. Wallace Grandmaiter, commander of the second tank in the column. "I fired and my first two rounds missed, but then I hit the engine in the drive wheels and finally in the boiler. Steam started coming out from all parts of it."

Recon men from B Troop's 2nd Platoon, still operating as lone wolves in the area between the two task forces, caught up with a retreating anti-tank gun and its crew. They blasted the gun with the 37 mm. guns on their armored cars. Then they sighted some German soldiers, armed with panzerfausts, speeding east on motorcycles. After a race across the plains, they overtook the Germans and stopped them with machine gun fire.

Early in the afternoon, B Battery of the 71st pulled off the road into position, went into action and in a few minutes destroyed two dual-purpose guns which were holding up the head of Task Force Dickenson's column.

When a civilian was hit by a peep along the road near Lohne, T/5 Merlin Halsey and T/5 Daniel R. Williams, medical aid men with the 22nd Engineers' B Co., loaded the man into the back of their ambulance and followed another civilian's directions to the nearest hospital.

They had expected to find a civilian hospital, but instead they found themselves in the yard of a big, four-story, 500-bed German army hospital with convalescent soldiers hanging out of all the windows. Out in front was a German colonel.

"Our arrival sort of surprised the colonel," said Cpl. Williams. "I guess he hadn't expected us."

Town Surrenders

Bad Oeynhausen formally surrendered to CC R at 1300. But when Task Force Dickenson reached the approaches to the town at 1600, it received direct and time fire from eight 76 mm. guns. Tank destroyers of the 628th went into action and blasted two of the enemy guns. The fire of one of the tank destroyers was directed by Lt. Paul H. McWain of the 71st Artillery. Shermans of the 81st A Co. silenced two more of the guns.

Then, in true western style, a 105 mm. artillery piece commanded by Sgt. Buford L. Smith, slid around a corner into position, opened up and knocked out two more 76's with direct fire. The German crews ran off and abandoned the last two guns. Captured in Bad Oeynhausen was a factory producing 88's and halftracks. Task Force Dickenson pushed past the town and at 1700 reached the Weser River south of Vlotho.

Late in the afternoon Task Force Anderson pulled up into the gap in the Wiehen Mountain Range at Bergkirchen. No enemy fire was encountered as the lead platoon went through the pass and down the steep descent to the broad plain which led to Minden. When they reached the floor of the valley they were fired on from the front and from both the flanks by concealed enemy anti-tank guns. Artillery fire was also thrown at them. The tanks poured counter-fire into the enemy gun positions. Other Shermans that pulled into defense positions behind buildings on the forward slope opened up and knocked out several enemy trucks that were racing toward Minden. During the night the lead platoon remained in the pass and consolidated its positions while the rest of Task Force Anderson coiled south of Bergkirchen.

At daylight a platoon from the married C Cos. was sent to seize and secure another pass west of the Bergkirchen gap. They accomplished their mission without meeting resistance. In the valley on the other side of the pass, however, the observation plane of the 47th spotted six 88's near Dutzen. The gun batteries opened up and, following the directions of the aerial observer, neutralized all of the enemy guns. Then, at 1400, the C Cos. outposts reported a strange column of vehicles was moving down the valley toward Minden.

Meanwhile, Lt. Franklin H. Copp and Pfc. Donald D. Wall had left the headquarters of CC B in a peep and were proceeding toward Minden under a flag of truce to request the burgermeister to surrender the town. With them they took the burgermeister of Bad Oeynhausen so that he would be able to assure the Minden official that the American forces treated the civilians humanely and adhered to the rules of the Geneva Convention.

Here Come The British

But when they started into the town, they met the lead tanks and armored vehicles of the British Third Para Brigade. It was the column which had been seen by the C Cos. outposts as it advanced down the valley on the right flank, and it was now entering the town from the northwest.

The British column's lead tank had just been shot up by an 88, so the Para Brigade commander refused to permit Lt. Copp and Pfc. Wall to continue on their mission.

"He said we would lose our peep if we rounded the next corner," said Lt. Copp. "He was more concerned about our division's artillery which was scheduled to shell the town in a few hours if it did not surrender. He was afraid the barrage would fall on his own troops."

The British commander asked Lt. Copp to race back to CC B Headquarters and have the scheduled shelling cancelled.

During the morning Col. Dickenson shot patrols to reconnoiter the river banks in his area, to see if any bridges were still intact. No crossing was located, but some German soldiers were spotted attempting to escape across the stream in big river barges.

Sgt. Benjamin Temple, chief mortar observer, radioed back to his 15th Mortar Platoon, which started to lob shells into the enemy ferry.

"After we covered the barges with mortar fire, we called on the Assault Gun Platoon for help," said Lt. George H. Richey. "They went into action and sank all 11 of the barges."

Mortar Routs Foe

Some of the enemy soldiers tried to take cover in a factory across the river, but the Mortar Platoon set up a captured 120 mm. German mortar and demolished the building.

The 71st batteries had moved into position east of Bad Oeynhausen, ready to pound Minden into submission if the town did not surrender. When the British moved into the city and the shelling was cancelled, the 71st prepared to support the 84th Inf. Div. which was preparing to establish a bridgehead across the Weser south of Minden.

The 84th pushed across the river and set up its ponton bridge without meeting too much opposition. They did not find it necessary to call upon the 71st for supporting fire. The batteries then undertook some aerial observed missions. One of the objectives they knocked out was an entire flak train, mounting the new German 105 mm. flak gun.

During the next few days both task forces remained on the west bank of the Weser, consolidating their positions and flushing out by-passed German soldiers from the woods around their areas. This mopping-up process between April 4 and 8 netted CC B 1057 prisoners.

After reaching the Weser, CC B was placed in division reserve and given the mission of supporting CC A and CC R in the drive from the Weser to the Elbe. On the afternoon of April 8, Task Force Anderson moved into Minden to temporarily garrison the city. The next day the 71st was attached to CC A to reinforce the supporting batteries of the 47th Artillery.

On April 10, CC B pulled up stakes and rolled east again. Task Force Dickenson moved southeast to Hameln to relieve elements of the 30th Inf. Div. as the security guard of the ponton bridge which had been thrown across the river there. Task Force Anderson and the rest of CC B also crossed the river at Hameln, but continued east down the division's main supply route. Out in front of Division Headquarters, clearing the route, were the married C Cos. and one section from the 81st's Assault Gun Platoon.

In the air above the speeding tanks and halftracks, a Cub observation plane piloted by Lt. Merritt D. Francies, with Lt. William S. Martin as observer, was spotting targets for the 71st gun batteries when an enemy Storch observation plane was noticed circling around at tree-top level. Diving on the small German craft, Lts. Francies and Martin opened up on it with their pistols and punctured one of the gas tanks. Getting above the Storch, they forced it to the ground where it crashed against a fence. After landing their Cub near the wrecked plane, they captured the two enemy airmen, one of whom had been wounded.

When CC B reached the Weser–Elbe Canal two days later, the married B Cos. relieved elements of CC A as security guards for the canal bridges. Earlier that day, in a woods near Rohrberg, CC B's executive officer, Lt. Col. Edwin M. Coates, set off with two tanks commanded by Lt. Carlo Lombardi of the 81st's D Co. and a halftrack of men led by Lt. Curtis L. Ramsey of the 22nd Engineers' B Co., and rounded up 440 German soldiers, including 30 officers. The surrender was arranged by Lts. Lombardi and Ramsey, who drove a peep into the enemy-occupied woods and persuaded the Germans to lay down their arms. The enemy force had 26 horses and 12 wagons loaded with equipment. That night CC B coiled east of Thuritz.

Push To Elbe

The next morning the command started clearing the main supply route from Maxenbush to the Elbe. The column was led by the married C Cos., which started rolling at 0700. As the armor pushed toward the river, one platoon was dropped off in each village to search for enemy soldiers. Near Inden 50 American and British prisoners who had marched 600 miles from Poland and were now being marched back toward Berlin, were liberated and their guards captured.

By 1300 the lead elements had cleared the 26-mile route and were overlooking the Elbe. Beside the river, waiting to cross by ferry to Sandu, were 60 enemy vehicles, loaded with army supplies. The tanks fired on some barges attempting to cross the river and on enemy personnel on the east bank. Before pulling back to take up defense positions for the night around Inden, the C Cos. knocked out the lead vehicles in the enemy column so that the Germans would not be able to get them across during the night.

At 2000 Task Force Dickenson pulled up in Bruneau after an all-day, 122-mile dash from Hameln where it had been relieved during the morning by corps.

The next two days, April 14 and 15, were spent clearing a corridor six miles wide along the main supply route from Osterburg to the Elbe. Small groups also patrolled the route.

Men in CC B wondered what their next move would be — whether they would jump the river and drive on Berlin, push north toward Denmark, or simply sit and wait for the Russians to move up to the east bank of the Elbe. But none of these guesses was right.

COMBAT COMMAND A

CC A rolled over the Rhine at Wesel the afternoon and night of March 31. Tankers and infantrymen gazed open-mouthed at the circus atmosphere around the bridge site. Huge floodlights split the darkness. Boats, bulldozers and huge cranes were working on 24-hour shifts building more bridges across the Rhine. Anti-aircraft guns dotted the approaches. The bridge builders thumbed their noses at the Luftwaffe.

CC A was in division reserve after it crossed the Rhine, prepared to pass through either CC B or CC R and continue the attack.

Assembling his command in the Senden area, Gen. Regnier gave orders to Capt. Seymour Scott to secure a crossing over the Dortmund-Ems Canal with his A Troop of the 85th Recon. The recon men pushed off shortly after noon, and an hour later had covered eight miles to reach Hiltrup. Sgt. Kenneth E. Richardson's peep was leading the recon section as it eased into town. Everything looked quiet and normal. Suddenly a German machine gun fired on the peep. Then another machine gun opened up, followed by a bazooka shell. Richardson and his crew bailed out and Lt. Frank L. Thompson, who had followed the lead peep, moved his reconnaissance car up to cover the men as they made their way back to the column.

Capt. Scott immediately brought up the attached E Troop's assault gun platoon and started chopping down German positions. His radio flashed the situation back to CC A. The married A Cos. hit the road, headed for Hiltrup. Lt. Col. Richard E. Jones checked with Capt. Scott, decided to piledrive his way through the middle of the town. Tanks of A Co., 34th, deployed around the edge of Hiltrup, blasted the buildings, sent machine gun tracers skipping up the streets. Lt. Horace K. Ward's 1st Platoon of A Co., 46th, started into town, met dug-in enemy infantry on the town's outskirts and took 150 prisoners.

The mission was to get the bridge. The doughboys didn't stop to clean out the town. Pushing on down the main street and to the far edge of town, Ward's men could see the bridge still intact. As they approached the bridge in a skirmish line, a German assault gun opened up at them from across the canal. Pfc. Parvey J. Bourque, a 1st Platoon bazookaman, fired at the German gun and it retreated into nearby woods.

A Bridgehead Is Won

Lt. Ward, S/Sgt. James Callahan, Pfc. Frank Larson and Pfc. George Avett rushed toward the bridge, gained the approaches and started across just as the Germans blew the bridge. Knocked down and stunned by the explosion, the men crawled back to the bridge approach and waited for the other two platoons to arrive. Then Lt. Ward started across the bridge again, climbing over the twisted girders. Reaching the other side, he destroyed a German machine gun nest with a hand grenade.

Under cover of S/Sgt. Malcolm Bodarian's A Co., 46th, machine gun squad and Lt. Herbert P. Anesty's headquaters assault guns, the 1st Platoon, then the 2nd and finally the 3rd Platoon of A Co., 46th, crossed the canal. Some struggled across the wreckage of the bridge; others used small civilian boats they found on the banks. The company's aggressive action soon won a bridgehead on the far bank of the canal.

Meanwhile the married B Cos., which had been attached to Division Headquarters on April 1, were having their share of troubles. Headquarters had planned to cut north over a virgin route, the married B Cos. spearheading. Just north of Albersloh, three miles southeast of the point where the married A Cos. were fighting at the Dortmund Canal, they began to receive artillery fire. The column pushed on almost to Wolbeck where it was stopped by fire from self-propelled guns to the front.

Simultaneously, the enemy concealed in woods on both sides opened up with bazookas, machine guns and small arms. The entire point, three tanks and three half-tracks commanded by Lt. Thomas W. Burke, was lost. The fourth halftrack in column received a direct hit and four men were killed and seven wounded.

When the lead halftrack was knocked out, S/Sgt. Edward J. McCarthy, the squad leader, lost a foot, but rallied his men and refused to be evacuated until they were reorganized and returning the enemy's fire.

The men whose vehicles had been destroyed scattered into the woods and found themselves surrounded on three sides. Sgt. Stanley A. Shiverski and Sgt. Fred Roeben moved their tanks up under the anti-tank and bazooka fire to cover the withdrawal of the surrounded men. Lt. Burke and Lt. Charles Stevens helped reorganize them at the edge or the woods.

Medics Surrounded

"Medics! Medics!" the forward men shouted, and Pvt. William S. Knapke and Pfc. Glenn Reynolds hurried toward the front of the column, treated and evacuated eight men under fire. Returning to the front, they went past the forward infantry to check two burning tanks, but the crews had escaped. Further up the road another tank was burning. Knapke raced to it, climbed on and tried to look into the turret, but smoke was pouring out and he could see nothing.

"Anyone in there?" he called. Just then someone yelled from beside the tank. He looked over and saw four Germans. Knapke leaped off the tank and, with Reynolds, jumped in their peep. The engine wouldn't start.

"I looked into the ditch by the roadside and there were four more Jerries," said Knapke. "One was loading a bazooka. I piled out of the peep and hit the opposite ditch from the Germans. Reynolds followed me. The Krauts by then were chasing after us and yelling, 'Give up! Give up!'

"We were cornered on three sides. Our nearest troops were 300 yards behind us. Then the tankers started firing over us at the Germans and under this cover we scrambled up the ditch to our lines. Those tankers saved us for sure."

"Several times I thought I'd seen my first and last action," said Reynolds. He had left the States on Feb. 10, less than two months before.

A Squeeze Is Worked

B Co., 46th Inf., set up a line south of Wolbeck and prepared to hold there for the night. Reviewing the action later, Capt. Raymond Weeks, B Co., 34th commander, estimated the force opposing him at 200 SS troopers and four to six self-propelled guns or Mark V tanks.

At 1915, Division Headquarters returned the B Cos. to CC A control. Col. Edward G. Farrand, Chief of Staff, remained with Capt. Weeks and Capt. Hewitt until command and fire direction channels had been reestablished with CC A. Messages were sent out to the married A and B Cos., only three miles apart, to maintain contact with the enemy and to attack east and north respectively next morning to join up at Wolbeck.

A Co., 46th Inf., consolidated its bridgehead and took 200 prisoners during the night. An A Co. patrol led by Lt. Sol Lubin ranged two miles to the east and before daylight had located a bridge over a small stream which formed the last water barrier before Wolbeck.

At the Dortmund-Ems Canal, A Co., 22nd Engineers, worked all night to build a 132-foot treadway bridge. It was ready by 0615. Two platoons of A Co, 34th, tanks had roared across when a section of the bridge failed. It was repaired by 1100, and the remainder of the force poured across the canal toward Wolbeck.

The married B Cos. pushed off at 1030 toward Wolbeck, found the previous day's fighting and all-night artillery pounding had dissolved most of the resistance. The married A and B Cos. met in Wolbeck at noon.

In these two actions, fought only three miles apart and only six miles south of the city of Munster, CC A took more than 600 prisoners, killed 200 more of the enemy and destroyed three flak batteries.

Following CC R's route, CC A raced to the vicinity of Herford, reaching the city April 4. The combat command stayed near Herford, for the next five days, waiting for bridgeheads to be made over the Weser.

Over the Weser

CC A streamed across the Weser River at Hameln on April 9, close on the heels of CC R's flying column. CC A's original mission was to cut south of Hannover, then swing northeast and work in the northern part of the division's zone. The 71st and 47th Artillery Bns. were in support.

Shortly after midnight the command bivouacked south of Hannover and Capt. Scott's A Troop, 85th Recon, streaked northeast and seized the first of two bridges over the Weser—Elbe Canal at Sehnde. Task Force Burton was ordered to secure both bridges, and a married platoon led by Lt. Walter E. Williams and Lt. Morris Goldberg rumbled to the first bridge before dawn. Two infantry squads were rushed to the second bridge, but were beaten back by heavy automatic fire and artillery.

While the married platoons captured the bridge, CC A had received a change of orders which gave them the southern half of the division zone instead of the northern half and ordered them to attack all the way to the Elbe. The platoons held their one good bridge and protected CC A's northern flank as it moved out.

CC A moved at noon on April 10 and passed through Peine at 1630. The 85th Recon's fleet A Troop snatched another bridge from the Germans over the Oker River at Didderse. Sgt. June R. McCloud and his recon section raced to the bridge. He called back over the radio, "Hello. Able 31 to Able 5. I'm at the bridge. It's intact. Wait. I'm going to cross." Just then the Germans blew the bridge. McCloud came back on the radio, "Hello, Able 5. They just blew the bridge! Stand by. I'm going to take a look." Two minutes passed, and then, "Hello, Able 5. Bridge is okay. All of the charge didn't go off. I'm cutting the rest of the wires."

By 2040 Task Force Burton had the A Cos. astride the main Brunswick—Gifhorn road. By 2300 the entire combat command was across the Oker and a married A Co. platoon led by Lt. Mouse P. Maurer and Lt. Joseph Clifton had secured the Wedelheine bridge over the Weser—Elbe Canal. As the married platoons rushed to the bridge, they caught heavy small arms and bazooka fire and saw the Germans feverishly preparing to blow the bridge. S/Sgt. John N. Schaeffer of A Co., 34th, deployed his tank section, placed such withering fire on them that the Germans withdrew, leaving the bridge undamaged. The 46th Inf. Assault Gun Platoon also laid down heavy fire to help drive the Germans away.

Armor Breaks Loose

CC A started to roll toward the Elbe at first shooting light on April 11, and before the day was over they had hung up a new record for combat distance traveled in one day. The C Cos. hurried to seize the bridge over the Fallersleben Canal, but took a wrong turn in the town because of a faulty map. In Fallersleben, Capt. Otto K. Georgi reconnoitered on foot, found the bridge and put the C Cos. on the right road. By 1200 the speeding C Cos. had crossed both the Weser—Elbe and Aller Canals and reached the crossroads east of Weyhausen. Here a Tiger tank stuck its nose over a hill in the distance and Lt. Donald E. Daniels and S/Sgt. Robert E. Mennow sniped at it with their 76 mm. guns. The German tank backed off the hill and disappeared.

The combat command thundered down the main roads, probed the route in front of them with splattering machine gun and tank fire, stopping only to clear roadblocks. The column ploughed on, mile after mile. Roadblock after roadblock was smashed as the churning column kept punching toward the Elbe.

More than 400 prisoners were taken during the day by the speeding tankers and infantry. A hospital with 500 more prisoners was found at Klotze.

The weather was clear and perfect for air support, but the ever-welcome P—47's were mysteriously absent in the afternoon. The men didn't learn until later that their lunging drive had carried them completely out of the planes' effective fighting range.

German supply columns were overtaken on the road and riddled with machine gun bullets. German vehicles rounded corners to find themselves faced with a 20-mile-long tank column. Burning German trucks, wagons and cars lay gutted in the ditches as CC A plunged on.

Task Force Jones was ordered to guard the road over which CC A traveled, and started dropping off small groups to guard bridges and intersections. Only Task Force Burton, with two married companies and the supporting artillery, was left when CC A reached Bismarck.

At 1700 Gen. Oliver came to Gen. Regnier's command post. He was elated with the command's phenomenal progress and assured the CC A commander that he would relieve Task Force Jones and send it back to CC A, and that he would get gasoline to the command, for by now gas supplies were dangerously low.

At 2200 CC A closed in bivouac for the night after a 63-mile fighting run in 13½ hours. CC R was fighting on the north flank, but was 25 miles to the rear. The 2nd Armd. Div. was 50 miles to the south. CC A had struck deep into the heart of Germany and was surrounded on three sides. The time was ripe to attack.

Next morning, April 12, the tankers and infantrymen struck toward the Elbe. Lt. Charles H. Taggert's light tank platoon of D Co., 34th, roamed the side roads, mopping up Germans fleeing from the bristling column. Lt. Glenn O. Garber's 628th Tank Destroyer platoon set up roadblocks at main intersections, pointing their long 90 mm. guns hopefully to the flanks and waiting for a blundering German column to come into their sights.

The roaring column churned on toward Tangermünde. The men did not have to be told that the Elbe River bridge at Tangermünde was one of the most important bridges in the world that day. They knew that if the bridge could be taken, the 5th Armored would roll into Berlin without waiting for orders or strategy.

Married C Cos., Lt. Robert E. Nicodemus' platoon leading, slammed into Tangermünde at noon, shooting as they rolled. The town was defended by four German battle groups, totaling 800 men with hundreds of panzerfausts. These groups were supported by heavy flak guns firing from across the river. One of the battle groups came from the German officer candidate school at Brandenberg and had been personally briefed by Hitler to penetrate American rear areas and harass supply lines. When cornered they were fanatical fighters.

Germans Open Up

The tanks thundered through the first four blocks in Tangermünde without a shot being fired at them. Suddenly the town's sirens began to wail. It was the signal for the Germans to start shooting with everything they had. Panzerfausts rained on the tanks, some hitting, others exploding against buildings and in the streets. German burp guns splattered against tank turrets. Sgt. Charles H. Householder, C Co., 34th, was in the lead tank, followed by Sgt. Leonard B. Haymaker's tank. As the Germans lobbed panzerfausts at them, the two sergeants started chopping down buildings with their tank guns. Their machine guns burned tracers into basement windows and through doors. Sgt. Householder stood high in his turret, firing his tommy gun while his gunner operated the machine gun and 76 mm. While thus exposed, Sgt. Householder was mortally wounded by sniper fire and his tank was disabled by a panzerfaust.

Sgt. Haymaker moved up and took the lead. His tank, too, was hit by a panzerfaust and burst into flames. The sergeant bailed out and then realized his crew could not escape under the heavy fire. Firing his tommy gun in short bursts, he moved toward the enemy, covering his crew while they withdrew, letting the Germans concentrate their fire on him. Sgt. Haymaker was killed as his crew escaped.

The medics ran to the knocked-out tanks when they were hit. T/5 John A. Dunleavy left the shelter of a building and dashed up the street to Sgt. Householder's tank. He dragged a wounded tanker to the rear of the tank and administered first aid. Picking up the wounded man, he started down the street. As he crossed an intersection Dunleavy was severely wounded by an enemy sniper. The medic was wounded a second time as he continued to drag the tanker to safety.

Pvt. Robert G. Milliman also went to Sgt. Householder's tank, pulled two wounded tankers from the turret and carried one to the safety of a building. He returned for the second man and was carrying him to safety when he was mortally wounded by sniper fire. Meanwhile, Lt. Nicodemus' tank moved forward. At an intersection the cross street was jammed with German infantrymen with rifles and bazookas. Pfc. Luther A. Parham, firing the machine gun mounted in his tank, killed or wounded 75 Germans, relieving most of the enemy pressure in that area.

C Co., 46th Inf., had dismounted and had begun cleaning out the buildings one by one as they moved toward the bridge. Reaching an intersection, the 2nd Platoon was stopped by sniper and bazooka fire from a house facing them. The platoon leader, Lt. Edgar D. Swihart, worked his way toward the house 150 yards away. S/Sgt. Raymond J. Caplette covered him from the other side of the street. Dodging from doorway to doorway, they both got within 50 yards of the house. Caplette fired four bazooka rounds into the house and Lt. Swihart rushed the remaining distance, entered the house and killed one German bazookaman and two riflemen.

A 47th Artillery observer, Lt. John E. Millett, Jr., came up to direct the fire of the three supporting artillery battalions. Sgt. Patsy A. Flaminio and Pfc. Preston E. Hutchcraft volunteered to take the observer to the observation post, a tower 300 yards away. Moving out ahead of the observer, these two men advanced toward the tower. They had gone a block when Hutchcraft, rounding a turn in the street, was instantly

killed by a sniper. Flaminio, instead of turning back, continued to lead the observer forward. A moment later he was mortally wounded. Lt. John A. Reed then went forward and led Lt. Millett the remaining distance.

The Fight From Outside

Capt. Henry P. Halsell, CC A S–3 Air officer, watched the fight from outside the city and wrote this description:

"I was with CC A's command post about a mile and a half outside Tangermünde. We were off the road on both sides, and my halftrack was on the left and nearest the town. The 47th Field Artillery Bn. was across the road from me and the 71st Field Artillery was behind me. The 557th Field Artillery's 155 mm. self-propelled guns were going into position further back. The weather was beautiful, with the sun shining brightly.

"The artillery was firing every 30 seconds and I could see the time fire burst over the bridge site and the red dust of brick rise from the town after each volley Some of the artillerymen were digging foxholes, for two planes had come over us very low during the morning and some artillery had landed near the engineers, on the right of the road nearer the town. The vehicles and guns, deployed in the flat fields, reminded me of desert maneuvers.

"I looked toward the town, clearly visible, and noticed a commanding rise of ground on the left of the road and the headquarters of the 46th Inf. on the road. I saw several people come over the hill and picked up my field glasses to watch. It was hard to tell what was going on, for there was little traffic on the radio. Gen. Regnier was in the town with Col. Burton at this time.

"The people on the hill proved to be German soldiers waving white handkerchiefs. As I watched, four men from the 46th detached themselves and went across the wheat field toward the Germans. As they went, more and more Germans popped out of foxholes, wanting only to surrender. I guess this must have gone on for at least an hour and that as many as 120 surrendered. The assault guns were in position at the base of the hill, firing over their heads. Perhaps they had a lot to do with the Germans' surrender.

A. A. Blasts Luftwaffe

"I was not able to watch continuously, for Heinie planes began to come in over us. I have never seen anything like it. They were not more than 50 to 100 feet off the ground. They came in from the north and from the south. We learned later that they were flying from nearby airfields. The first one I remember came from the north. Everyone opened up on it and it crashed near the engineers, shearing off a telephone pole beside the road as it bellied in. Shortly thereafter three more came from the same direction. We got two of these. The one that got away went off to the southeast so low that he had to climb to clear the hedges. A 387th Anti-Aircraft halftrack moved over to my side of the road to get in on the good shooting.

"Standing beside me was an Air Corps liaison officer and he could hardly contain himself. A pilot, he had flown 16 missions and had never seen a German plane. Today he had already seen six. He was listening to the VHF radio and could hear fighter-bombers working for the 2nd Armd. Div. somewhere near Brunswick, yet we could get no planes for ourselves. The pilot remarked to me, 'I'm not a very good pilot, but if I had my old T–bolt here, I'd be an ace inside of 10 minutes.'

"Planes continued to come in and be shot down. One jet plane appeared. Our guns opened up, but the pilot turned on the juice and was gone before you could blink an eye. Later in the afternoon the Germans got smart. Instead of coming over the artillery battalions with all their anti-aircraft protection, they beat it down the Elbe so low that we couldn't shoot at them.

"Late in the afternoon, however, one pilot came in from the south. He was flying a big, two-motored bomber about 60 feet off the ground. They got him very quickly, for he did a slow bank. His left wing hit the ground and the plane crashed, throwing

flaming gasoline over about an acre of ground. It was a beautiful sight, but awful, for two men in a 387th Anti-Aircraft halftrack were burned."

Back in town, as the married C Cos. continued to fight their way from house to house, the married A Cos. moved up, circled and attacked the town from the northwest, with two platoons of infantry supported by tanks. Panzerfausts exploded around the tanks and German snipers kept heavy fire on the surging infantry, but nothing could stop the drive. The married A's pushed into the town, and were halfway into the center of the city when two German officers were captured. They told Capt. Devault that the garrison wished to surrender. All firing ceased, except for occasional sniping shots by the fanatic SS, and negotiations began between Col. Burton and the German commander, with Capt. Georgi acting as interpreter. Agreement was made for the garrison to surrender at 1745.

SS Hinder Negotiations

"When the German officer went back through the city, he kept telling civilians that it was all over. The people cheered and cried with joy," Capt. Georgi said.

The entire problem of attacking the town had been made extremely difficult because of 500 American prisoners of war the Germans were holding in the city. They were in two groups. One group of 300 had been liberated by the married A and C Cos. when they drove into the town, but 200 more were still in the city under SS guard. The SS was making its stand in the very area where the Americans were imprisoned.

While the officers awaited an answer to their surrender terms, they heard the mighty roar of explosions. During the negotiations the word came to them that the Tangermunde bridge, the span that they had hoped would carry them on a last lap to Berlin, had been blown. Haste was no longer necessary now, and the most important consideration was to get the American prisoners to safety.

The surrender negotiations hit a snag, however. "The German colonel in charge of the city wanted to surrender," Col. Burton said. "He went to his subordinates, and most of them wanted to surrender too. But some of the SS troops said no, that they would defend the city. The mayor pleaded with them, but they still refused. When the German colonel demanded that they follow his orders to surrender and turned to leave, one of the SS men shot him. The colonel hit the ground, crawled along the ditch and escaped. Lt. Ellis R. McKay, Sgt. Woodrow Wilkinson and T/Sgt. Harry Gannon went forward and helped bring him to safety."

The men wanted nothing better than to blow down the town, for two tankers had been shot while negotiations were in progress, but the American prisoners were deciding factor in reopening negotiations for the last time. The SS were contacted once more and firing ceased again at 2100. Col. Burton, Major Fuller, Capt. Georgi and Lt. Anesty made up the American team.

"The SS captain was arrogant," said Capt. Georgi. "He said he refused to surrender the town because he held the 200 Americans and he knew we wouldn't attack for fear of killing them. I reminded him that the town was also full of civilians and that he was in no position to bargain for anything. Col. Burton told him flatly to deliver the Americans safely to our lines by 2230, and in return we would allow the civilians until 2300 to clear the town. Then we were going to blow it apart."

American PW's Liberated

This agreement was made, and at 2230 on the dot the Americans were brought to the combat command's lines. Civilians were streaming out of the town to the outlying hills. The SS still wanted to fight, and CC A was glad of it.

At 2315 the combat command was to begin its systematic destruction of the city with its big guns. Every gun and mortar was turned on the town. The

tank companies — 34 tanks — were lined up outside the city. Mortars and ussault guns were put in place. The tank destroyers brought up their big 90 mm. guns. Three battalions of artillery, the 47th and 71st battalions of 105 mm. howitzers and the 557th battalion of 155 mm. self-propelled guns were alerted to fire.

The destruction started on schedule. For almost an hour the earth trembled as the combined guns tore the city apart. Houses caved in, streets erupted and were no longer streets. By 2400 the city was dead. The men firing the guns throught with grim satisfaction of the SS still in the city. Everyone else had fled.

During the barrage Capt. Biederman, A Co., 34th, commander, was wounded for the third time during the division's campaign and was evacuated. Lt. Otho Thomas took charge of the company.

Meanwhile, Task Force Jones was waging another fight for a railroad bridge north of Tangermünde, sole remaining Elbe River bridge in the division's zone. By 1800 the married B Cos., under Col. Jones, had started their attack on the railroad bridge. It was the start of a dramatic, beautifully executed fight by the married companies.

Col. Jones moved his companies rapidly through Ostheeren, Miltern, Langensalzwedel and Staffelde to the main road junction west of the bridge. A German infantry company, well dug in, was waiting for the married B's as they moved toward the bridge.

The tanks deployed, started blasting the dug-in Germans. The 46th infantrymen piled out of their halftracks and began to work their way forward. The area above the bridge was white with air bursts as the artillery laid time fire to drive the Germans away and prevent their blowing it. The infantry ploughed on, using marching fire to clear out the defending Germans. Lt. Champ Montgomery's leading platoon had the bridge almost within their grasp and were only 60 yards away when the bridge exploded in their faces. Col. Jones immediately recalled his forces and pulled back to Staffelde and Langensalzwedel.

In the fight the German company defending the bridge was completely destroyed with 110 killed and 24 taken prisoner.

Airport Taken Intact

During the night the large town of Stendal had asked to surrender, and the next day, April 13, the combat command moved in. Near Stendal a large airport with 80 planes, all in operating condition but lacking fuel, was overrun.

The married A and B Cos. started to work north up the Elbe River, cleaning out Germans in CC A's assigned zones. The B Cos. worked closest to the river and ran into the toughest fighting. The married B's cleared the large forest east of Stendal and then approached the ferry site at Arneburg in three columns of one married platoon each. The right platoon, working up the river road a mile south of Arneburg, caught bazooka, 20 mm. and artillery fire. It was here that S/Sgt. Frank Wheeler's tank was hit. He was injured by a shell fragment. He bailed out, but when he looked around, he saw that one of his tank crew was missing. Running to the burning and smoking tank, he started to climb up on the tank when he was killed by a sniper.

At the same time the center platoons received small arms and heavy anti-tank fire, coming from 150 mm. railroad flak guns. Lt. Clint de la Houssaye put his assault guns into position to fire on the railroad guns, then captured a hill by himself so he could observe the fire. In taking the hill he drove off three Germans who were also using for it an observation post. Assault guns, mortars and direct tank fire pounded the heavy railroad guns, knocking them out.

The two flank platoons assembled on the center platoon for an assault on Arneburg. Task Force Jones deployed over a wide front, took the town under fire.

During a lull in the shelling, a white flag was hoisted in the town and Col. Jones gave the order to cease firing. A German medic came out of the town with 40 men and said the remainder of the garrison would surrender if given the opportunity. Col. Jones sent him back into the town with instructions that all who would surrender must give themselves up in 30 minutes. At 1830 he returned with 40 more prisoners, but said he lacked time to contact the whole garrison.

Heavy Fire From Hospital

It was growing dark, and Col. Jones decided to attack the town immediately. He gave instructions to attack at 1845, but to withdraw if fighting grew too heavy. The attack was made with two dismounted platoons of infantry moving abreast, covered by combined assault fire of the tanks and mortars. The advancing force was met by small arms, machine guns and bazooka fire. A large hospital was in the town and explicit instructions had been given to the men to avoid firing on it. It was from this hospital that the heaviest German fire came.

The leading platoons had penetrated into the middle of the town without the loss of a man when the decision was made to withdraw. The task force assembled in the woods near Wischer and throughout the night guns of the 34th Tank Bn. and 47th Artillery fired on Arneburg.

On April 14 Task Force Burton moved west and met the 102nd Infantry, coming up the river. The C Cos. remained in Stendal, guarding supply installations and controlling the large numbers of displaced persons.

At dawn Col. Jones moved his task force on Arneburg again, and after a 15-minute mortar and artillery concentration, launched an attack starting at 0830, with dismounted infantry supported by tanks. Resistance was light and the town was clear by 1140. In the attack Pfc. Robert E. Schierholz, a B Co. rifleman, saw a German bazookaman come up out of his foxhole, fire a round at a tank and miss. Schierholz nailed him with his M-1, putting eight rounds into the German before he could fall to the ground. Lt. Thomas Burke helped coordinate and direct most of the supporting fire.

The town netted an additional 52 prisoners and the German material losses amounted to four 150 mm. railroad guns, four 20 mm. flak guns, a military train, an ammunition dump and 10 American 2½-ton trucks.

Task Force Jones continued north after cleaning out the town and cut the last escape route for the Germans in the command's zone. The Germans were desperately trying to cross the river on ferries and barges at several points and the mortar platoons kept busy taking pot shots at them.

For the next week CC A scoured rear areas, looking for German forces who were harassing the division's supply lines. The 46th Reconnaissance Platoon and a CC A billeting detail were captured by a large German force near Kobbelitz. One man, Pfc. Perry Watkins, escaped and the others were held prisoner in the woods. Their German captors knew it was only a matter of time until they themselves were captured, and treated the Americans with the greatest respect, offering them cigarettes and finally releasing them the following night.

THE LAST FIGHT

After its spectacular drive to the Elbe the 5th Armored turned around, cleaned out by-passed rear areas, destroyed a newly-formed German division, and for the second time, fought to the Elbe River.

CCB raced 60 miles to the rear to trap and destroy the Von Clausewitz Division. CCA drove north to the Elbe and made contact with the British. CCR, keeping abreast of CCA, also drove to the Elbe.

This ended the division's fighting in Europe. The men in the division could look back with intense pride on what they had accomplished. Starting in Normandy, the 5th Armored had spearheaded the 3rd Army, 1st Army and 9th Army drives across the greater part of the continent in nine months of fighting.

COMBAT COMMAND B

CC B's final appearance on the Western Front came as an encore. But it was an encore which almost surpassed an already brilliant and spectacular main performance. Appropriately, it was a battle between American armored and German panzer forces. And it was CC B's most decisive engagement.

When the combat command reached the Elbe on April 13, it appeared that CC B's job on the continent had been completed. But on April 15, when word was received that marauding enemy groups were endangering the division's supply lines far to the rear, CC B was ordered to meet this new threat. At 1730 that day, less than an hour after they had rejoined the rest of the command on the Elbe after being relieved of their security mission at the Weser—Elbe Canal, the married B Cos. were sent racing back to Winterfield. The entire command prepared to make the 50-mile run the following morning.

While the column was on the road, rolling west during the morning, Col. Cole was notified that a convoy of supply trucks had been ambushed near Ehra. He immediately sent the armored fingers of the reconnaissance elements probing the area north of the main supply route between Ehra and Klotze. Task Force Anderson combed the area in the vicinity of Donitz, while Task Force Dickenson worked from Brome to Millin and the 85th's B Troop from Brome to Jubar. But no enemy force was encountered.

Forests Combed for Krauts

The forests in the area were combed again the next morning and roadblocks were strung out along a 25-mile front facing north from Wittingen through Zaesenbeck to Ruhrberg. Thirty minutes after tankers and infantrymen from the married A Cos. had set up a roadblock near Ohrdorf they spotted a column of vehicles sneaking along the edge of a woods southeast of Wittingen.

"We could just about make them out because they were about 2600 yards away," said S/Sgt. Harold J. Strunk, sergeant of the 2nd Platoon. "There were five tanks and two halftracks."

"Right after we caught our first glimpse of the column, it disappeared behind another clump of trees," said Sgt. Salvatore Candito, a tank commander. "But when it came out on the other side of the trees, we started tossing shells at it."

Sgt. John Ivers, tank gunner, targeted in and, at the 2600-yard range, knocked out a tank and a halftrack.

That evening Col. Cole summoned his task force commanders for a meeting at CC B Headquarters. On his way there, Col. Dickenson was thrown out of his peep and injured when the peep hit a bomb crater in the road. He was evacuated to a hospital and Major Emerson F. Hurley took over command of the task force.

That night Task Force Anderson established roadblocks at Mehmke, Ruhrberg and Stockheim, while Task Force Hurley set up roadblocks at Zaesenbeck, Ohrdorf and Wittingen.

About noon on April 18 the 71th Artillery observation plane reported that strange vehicles were moving southeast out of Lindhof. A section from the married B Cos. was sent to investigate, and when the men reached Jubar they noticed what appeared to be a column of enemy tanks heading into the woods north of Ludelsen.

More Road Blocks Established

Task Force Anderson moved quickly to surround this enemy force. The married B and C Cos. set up strong roadblocks at Jubar, Borsen, Mehmke and Stockheim, while a tank destroyer platoon from the 628th's B Co. and the Anti-Tank Platoon from the 15th's B Co. put in a roadblock at Ludelsen.

After all of the exits from the forest had been sealed off, the gun batteries of the 71st, which were in position at Gladdenstadt, started plastering the woods. Fire was adjusted by the Cub observation plane, and then the 47th and 555th Artillery Bns. joined in the serenade.

When the clouds of billowing smoke and dust started to clear, a platoon of infantrymen with a tank destroyer and a new M-26 tank went down one of the firebreaks to develop the situation.

"Our first shot got an American truck which the Krauts had captured and were using," said Sgt. Herbert A. West, commander of the tank destroyer. "After our second shot set the truck on fire, our third round also went through the truck, set fire to a halftrack that was behind it, and then knocked out an armored reconnaissance car."

Small arms fire was heavy, but the M-26 tank opened up with its powerful 90 mm. gun and destroyed two more armored vehicles. Then the small probing force was instructed to pull back out of the forest immediately. Supporting flights of Thunderbolts had arrived to deliver a final, crippling blow to the remaining enemy resistance in the woods.

Six flights of four planes each descended on the woods. Following the radio directions of the slow-flying but sharp-eyed Horsefly (air-ground liaison observation plane), they bombed and strafed and sent rockets smashing into the trapped enemy force. The roar of the explosions could be heard for miles across the German heartland and by dusk every German vehicle beneath the huge clouds of dust and smoke had been destroyed.

The Horsefly, a recent innovation to aid fighter-bomber observation, had been developed some time ago, but ideas for its further development had been added by Major Ernest Briggs, division G-3 air officer. Lt. Edward F. Little, of CC A Headquarters, did the observing during the action, helped the fighter-bombers locate their targets, then radioed back the results.

Survivors of the attack came out of the woods. Sick of war and shaken within an inch of their lives, they surrendered readily.

Just before dark the 3rd Platoon of the married A Cos. went up from Ohrdorf through Haselhorst and set up a roadblock in the little village of Lindhof. They were sent there to prevent any elements of the battered enemy force to their right from moving west and also to protect the 71st batteries which had taken up positions to the south of Haselhorst. They did not know what was north of them and had been informed that friendly troops might be in the area.

About 2130 that night a powerful force of tanks and armored vehicles descended from the north and rolled into the village.

"We held our fire and let them get up close to us because their column was led by three American halftracks," said Cpl. Vincent Stolarczyk, 15th infantryman. "We didn't know they were Heinies until they started talking German."

"Before we knew it, they had hit our tank and set it on fire," said Cpl. Stacey Dickson an 81st tank commander. "We were lucky and we all managed to get out of it all right."

When the Germans started to surround the roadblock, the GI's fought their way out of the encirclement and pulled back toward Haselhorst. Ten infantrymen and two halftracks got caught in the enemy trap. The wounded infantry platoon leader, Lt. William M. Capron, was evacuated on the back of one of the tanks.

From a ridge near Haselhorst, the tankers, acting as observers, started directing artillery fire on the enemy vehicles and temporarily halted the advance.

"We used our knocked-out tank, which was burning brightly in the darkness, as a reference point and laid down the artillery barrages all around it," said Sgt. Wilbert Hufman.

When the shells started whining in on the enemy force and scattering the German soldiers, the A Co. infantrymen who had been encircled took the opportunity to make a break from their captors. Cpl. Stolarczyk and Pvt. Glen Byrd got up and ran while the Germans had their heads down and rejoined their platoon at Haselhorst. Then Pfc. Robert E. Scharon and Pfc. Charles G. Harrison climbed out of the foxhole where they had concealed themselves and made a dash to one of their abandoned halftracks. While Scharon guided him from the front of the vehicle, Harrison drove the halftrack back to American lines.

Enemy Plans Revealed

"They captured me and I was put in a halftrack with 12 Germans," said Pvt. Basilo Contrares. "But when our shells began whistling in, they all jumped out and headed for cover — all except my guard. So during the excitement I grabbed him and threw him out ot the vehicle, but when a shell blew his head off, I took off and got back to my outfit."

When the enemy assault wave first hit the roadblock at Lindhof and started to overrun it, the 85th's B Troop, which was holding a block on a road that ran northeast out of Lindhof, captured one of the attackers. Pfc. Ray F. Burke took this soldier and rushed him back to CC B Headquarters through territory that had now been overrun by the Germans.

Interrogated by Lt. Franklin P. Copp, this prisoner revealed not only the identification of this enemy force, but also its strength, mission and operational plans. He stated that it was the Von Clausewitz Panzer Div., and that it was attempting to push south across the Weser—Elbe Canal and then head for the Harz Mountains. The recon party that had been sent out to find a clear route south out of Jubar was the force that had been destroyed in the woods that afternoon.

The main body of the panzer division, he said, consisted of three task forces. Each task force, approximately 1000 men strong, was equipped with one Mark V tank, two tanks mounting 75 mm. guns, one Mark IV with 75 mm. rifle, one tank destroyer mounting an 88, 25 halftracks, four 105 mm. self-propelled howitzers, three tractor towed 105 mm. guns, many cargo trucks, and several American peeps, trucks and halftracks. The division also had attached to it a special signal company so that it could remain in direct contact with its army group.

Said CC B's S-2, Major Martin M. Philipsborn, who had also served as an intelligence officer in North Africa, "This is the first instance in operations against the enemy, that I can recall, when we knew his strength, objective and tactical plans while they were still being executed."

This invaluable information was immediately dispatched to all units. They now knew what faced them and could prepare to counter the enemy plans. On the road that led west out of Lindhof, Headquarters Platoon of the 85th's B Troop held a roadblock with two halftracks, one armored car and three peeps. When the B Troop commander, Capt. Loran L. Vipond, read the message from CC B, he immediately sent back the following message: "If the attack is diverted in this direction, we may need a little help."

While one enemy column was pushing from Lindhof to Haselhorst that night, another started south down a second route which led to Hanum. Out in front was a truck and an American halftrack with all guns blazing. When a 628th tank destroyer smashed both vehicles as they approached the town, the remainder of the column deployed into the woods and did not attempt to advance any further.

Throughout the night the enemy vehicles could be heard moving about and getting into position for an attack in the morning. At the A Cos. command post the tank company commander, Capt. Robert M. McNab, and the infantry commander, Capt. George W. Kellner, organized their men and prepared to meet the full weight of the enemy thrust. The married 1st Platoon was sent to Haselhorst to reinforce the 3rd Platoon. Then, after the 71st batteries had displaced from Haselhorst to Ohrdorf, the two platoons also pulled back to Ohrdorf at 0500 and set up defense positions in a semi-circle around the town.

"As we were withdrawing to these new positions, a German self-propelled gun and a halftrack started down the road toward us," said Lt. Robert P. Lant, the 1st Platoon tank commander. "Our tanks opened up and got the gun and our infantry shot up the personnel in the halftrack."

Germans Try Again

At daybreak the German tanks and self-propelled guns rumbled to the edge of the woods and started blasting the defense positions around the town. Two medium tanks were hit and the building in which the 71st fire direction center was located was also hit and set on fire. The rest of the Shermans swept the advancing enemy tanks and guns with fire and the artillery batteries put down a barrage of shells on them.

"We pumped five shots into a Mark IV and finally stopped it," said Sgt. Charles Petersen, tank commander.

The enemy attack got no further than the edge of the woods.

To the west, tank destroyer men on a roadblock near Wittingen saw two German vehicles come out of the forest behind them.

"Our gun was pointed in the opposite direction when we spotted them through binoculars," said Sgt. Mike Gazdaka. "We swung it around quickly and at a range of 1500 yards knocked out both of them. We later discovered that one was a halftrack and the other a German tank destroyer."

At Lindhof Pfc. Grover Peffers and Pvt. Paul Dempsky had remained in their foxholes all night while the artillery pounded the enemy-held village. Then, at daybreak, they crawled out and were taken prisoner.

"We got to talking to this Heinie tech sergeant who spoke very good English," said Dempsky. "He had lived in the States for several years and we talked about Boston and New York and the World's Fair. And then he told us he was fed up and wanted to surrender. So during the next barrage the three of us took off for our lines."

All day the artillery continued to smash the bottled-up enemy vehicles which had deployed in the woods. Waves of Thunderbolts roared in and, working through the Horsefly, mercilessly strafed and bombed the German force.

During the afternoon six enemy ambulances, loaded with wounded, pulled down to American lines and surrendered. Out of the woods came streams of nerve-shattered prisoners, including all of the division's staff except the division commander, Gen. Unr ein, and his chief of staff who managed to slip through to the south and were later captured in the Harz Mountains.

When one of these prisoners declared that a GI lay wounded in a house at Lindhof, the report was radioed to Task Force Hurley and was overheard by Pfc. George S. Kehm and Pvt. Herman Kaplan, medical aid men.

Although the village was in German hands and was being leveled by artillery and fighter-bombers, Kehm and Kaplan left immediately in their peep and entered Lindhof. The peep was seen by the planes from the air, but task force headquarters could no assure the pilots that it was one of their vehicles,so the planes continued to bomb and strafe.

"After we picked up the wounded man and started back out of town," said Kaplan, "six Germans who said they wanted to surrender jumped on the peep and came back with us."

On the right flank Task Force Anderson combed the woods in which the recon elements of the Von Clausewitz Div. had been trapped, but no further resistance was encountered. Later in the afternoon the roadblocks south of Jubar were strengthened, as it was believed that theGermans would make an attempt after dark to break through there.

The remnants of this debacle did make the desperate attempt to escape through the steel cordon that had been tightened around them, but they were unsuccessful.

"Our battery was still in position near Ohrdorf and about 0230 that morning we heard their vehicles start milling around, and then about 0400 they started coming toward us," said Lt. Norman E. McNees, reconnaissance officer for the 71st's B Battery. "We started firing point blank, but we didn't hit anything in the dark."

"When it got light," said Sgt. Philip L. Henderson, third section chief, "we knocked out a radio truck with direct fire and captured the occupants of an armored recon car and a motorcycle rider."

Sgt. Gazdayka and his tank destroyer crew, after firing without success in the dark, went into action again at dawn and destroyed a halftrack and a cargo truck.

At 1000 that morning the married B Cos. started clearing the Klotze Forest from the east, pushing west toward Lindhof and Haselhorst. The fighter-bombers and artillery worked the woods over again about noon and by 1400 both towns had been taken. On the west side of the forest a tank equipped with a loudspeaker urged the Germans to surrender. Twenty men and one officer responded immediately.

CC B had trapped two task forces of the Von Clausewitz Division in this pocket. The third task force had turned west and then south and was being destroyed by XIII Corps troops. By the morning of April 21, all of the enemy vehicles which had attempted to slice through CC B had been knocked out and all but a few of the German soldiers had been killed or captured. CC B's losses in annihilating these two task forces were five men killed, two wounded, two missing.

Since April 1 the command had taken 3150 prisoners, killed 800 Germans and wounded 800 more. And it had destroyed or captured 72 miscellaneous assault guns, 110 miscellaneous vehicles, 10 tanks, 21 locomotives, a trainload of ammunition, 11 barges and two flak radar stations.

On April 24 the order came down for CC B to leave the Klotze Forest and move to another area a few miles west. Men in the command did not know it then, but for them the war in Europe was over.

COMBAT COMMAND A

On April 20, CC A was alerted for a move to clear out German pockets north toward the Elbe. That afternoon A Troop, 85th Recon, and Task Force Jones moved north, clearing the woods north of Rohrberg and seizing the line of departure for the attack.

At 0100 the forces manning the line of departure reported vehicular movement to their front. From prisoners it was learned that two battle groups of 100 to 200 men each, with 12 assault guns or tanks, were attempting to move south through the outpost line. Enemy pressure increased, and soon the married 2nd Platoons of the B Cos. were heavily engaged in the darkness against an aggressive enemy. The

platoons were only at half strength as a result of the previous heavy fighting at Wolbeck, the railroad bridge and Arneburg.

Lt. Alfred Richter, B Co., 34th, platoon leader, called for permission to withdraw from the town of Wistedt and move back across a small stream 50 yards from the town. By 0500 enemy infantry had infiltrated across the stream and superior forces were closing in on the platoon from three sides. The married 2nd Platoons withdrew across the stream and reinforced the 3rd Platoons in Langenapel.

At 0630 Col. Burton arrived at Langenapel with the married A Cos. The presence of this force effectively discouraged the enemy from making further attacks. Gen. Regnier arrived shortly afterwards and made plans for the 2nd and 3rd Platoons to retake Wistedt. The married platoons attacked the town again and by noon had retaken it. Gen. Oliver had come forward to confer with Gen. Regnier and watched the fight as Wistedt was recaptured.

In Wistedt the married platoons found ample testimony of the effectiveness of the fight they had been waging. A total of 171 prisoners was taken, and 24 trucks, 10 trailers, two halftracks, six scout cars and two assault guns were destroyed.

Meanwhile the married A Cos. had deployed over a wide front and, as soon as Wistedt was taken, launched a full scale attack on Hennigen. The town was quickly taken, together with large numbers of prisoners. Most of the prisoners were from the Panzer Brigade Feldhernhalle, the same outfit which had given CC A such a fierce fight outside Luxembourg City back in September.

By now the backbone of the enemy's defenses had been broken and CC A advanced rapidly. In Gergan Task Force Burton came under mortar and anti-tank fire. The infantrymen of A Co., 46th, dismounted and mopped up the resistance. By nightfall, leading elements had reached Gaddau.

Resistance was lighter on April 22. In the morning the A Cos. received two concentrations of nebelwerfer fire and suffered casualties. The command advanced rapidly north through a large forest, meeting scattered small arms and rocket fire.

Tallyho!

The afternoon of April 22, the A Cos. made contact with the British. The meeting almost ended in disaster. American, British and German forces were so intermingled throughout the area that it was impossible to decide whether to fire if a strange vehicle were sighted.

Cpl. James E. Mathies, tank gunner of A Co., 34th, was all set for anything as his tank rounded a corner and he saw an unfamiliar vehicle 400 yards away, its gun pointed straight at Mathies' tank. Mathies' 76 roared twice in rapid succession and the rear of the strange vehicle disappeared. It was a British scout car. The British soldiers manning it piled out and were recognized before further damage was done.

The British commander of the car afterwards came up looking for Mathies. "That was fast shooting, old chap," he told the 34th gunner. "We had been there an hour, waiting to shoot anything that moved around that corner, and when you came around it you hit me twice before I could lay my hand on the trigger." With that he patted the startled Mathies on the back and went to see what he could salvage out of his scout car.

The combat command continued to push north, cleaning out objectives one by one during the day. Major Fuller, leading the married C Cos., reached the last corps objective on the west.

During the night the C Cos. sent out a patrol to make contact with the A Cos. on their right. An enemy column was discovered, caught between the two married companies. Lt. Walter Williams, commanding the 2nd Platoon of A Co., 34th, with tank destroyers of A Co., 628th, knocked out two German tanks at a road block and the patrol was burdened with so many prisoners that it had to return without making contact.

The last day of the fight, April 23, the married A Cos. of Capt. De Vault and Lt. Thomas attacked the town of Hitzacker and seized the high ground nearby. The 85th Recon set up an observation post there. Hitzacker was defended by a company of dug-in

infantry on the western edge, a roadblock, a flak gun, a Panther tank and many panzerfausts. The 46th infantrymen attacked the town on foot, supported by tank and tank destroyer fire. As they moved in they received heavy fire from German machine guns and the Panther tank. The machine gun positions were chopped up by the heavy tank fire, and the Panther tank was blasted with three direct hits by Cpl. Samuel Kubisco, Lt. Williams' gunner.

By 1300 the town was taken and the high ground to the north secured. A total of 200 prisoners was taken in the town.

From the high ground the infantry spotted a barge loaded with Germans trying to escape with their equipment across the Elbe. Tank guns fired at it, but it floated out of range down the river. A Cub plane arrived and laid in the command's artillery, knocking out the heavily loaded barge.

On the north the married C Cos. pushed patrols down to the Elbe at numerous points. Task Force Jones took prisoners in the Dannenberg Forest and at Schmardau the 34th Reconnaissance Platoon forced the surrender of an entire German company. At a large oil dump near the river, Capt. Seymour Scott, commanding A Troop, 85th Recon, captured another 170 Germans with their officers.

By a coincidence, a German maintenance unit surrendered its complete equipment, including a large stock of tires and tubes, to the 34th maintenance officer, Capt. Armand C. Cabrel. The German unit had heard a rumor that it was to be used to defend Berlin, and had decided to reassemble on the American side of the river and surrender.

April 24 the 29th Inf. Div. relieved CC A and the command moved to occupy an area further west.

V-E Day found the command peacefully caring for displaced persons, the war having ended for them almost two weeks before.

COMBAT COMMAND R

CC R had ended its first battle for the Elbe River, but the combat command had still another mission ahead of it before the war ended for them.

The combat command was mopping up scattered resistance in the vicinity of Winterfeld when, on April 18, it was ordered north of Salzwedel, in the British Zone of Occupation. From there it was to drive north, smash strong enemy forces still holding the area, and take the Elbe River town of Dannenberg. For the second time in a month its objective was the historic Elbe.

April 20, C Troop of the 85th Recon set out from Salzwedel to reconnoiter routes toward Luchew and ran into enemy roadblocks and infantry in the woods west of Salzwedel.

The order for the attack came April 21. The married A and C Cos. under Col. Hamberg were to clean out German forces from the woods to the west, while the married B's were to push toward Luchow and await the rest of the combat command there.

Clearing the woods was no simple mopping up operation for Task Force Hamberg. The enemy armored and infantry forces holding the area were augmented by Germans who had been pushed back into the woods by CC A's advance on the left of CC R.

While one married company thrust south from Seehen to a railroad line, the other struck north from the southern edge of the woods. The 95th Artillery smashed enemy troops and materiel caught in the trap, blasting eight dual-purpose 88 mm. guns, nine nebelwerfers and a number of machine gun nests.

Near Seeben, Pvt. Hugo D. Musgrove, 47th infantryman, set off into the woods after four German soldiers and found himself face-to-face with an enemy tank. He ran back to his halftrack, snatched up a bazooka, returned, and with his second round destroyed the retreating tank at the weapon's maximum range of 300 yards.

By 2100, when the task force bivouacked for the night, they had flushed out and destroyed nine long-barreled 75 mm. guns mounted on Czechoslovakian tank chassis, as well as three armored vehicles, a Volkswagon and a dozen trucks.

The married B Cos. attacked north at 1430 and ran into heavy enemy fire from their left flank as they neared Saase. Lt. Howard K. Kettlehut, 95th Artillery forward observer, moved with the forward elements, directing artillery fire from his batteries on anti-tank guns and nebelwerfer positions. A half hour later the armored column hit a roadblock protected by mines. The C Co. engineers went forward to clear the mines while the task force went into bivouac. In a day of hard, bitter fighting the combat command had taken 300 prisoners.

Their mission of clearing the woods completed, the married A and C Cos. of Task Force Hamberg moved out at 0645 the next morning, April 22, in two columns pushing toward Luchow. The C Cos. moved through Seeben and Luckau; the A Cos. through Brietz, Wustrow and Dolgow.

South of Luchow the B Cos. ran into a hasty minefield. Lt. Stephen E. Allen, Jr., and his 22nd Engineer platoon cleared away the mines and the column ground on toward the town.

The two columns of Task Force Hamberg joined near Luchow and the C Cos. led the way into the town. The B Cos., on a parallel route across the Juetze River, entered Luchow from the opposite side. The town surrendered unconditionally at 0815.

The two task forces pressed on, the A and C Cos. of Task Force Hamberg striking north through Grabow; the B Cos. thrusting through Seeraw toward Zadrau. As they advanced, all three companies came under heavy nebelwerfer fire north of Luchow. The columns halted while the 95th Artillery went into position. Because of the difficult terrain, however, placing the howitzers into position to bring fire on the nebelwerfers proved to be a long, tedious task.

While the column was halted, Lt. Robert Stutman led a dismounted patrol from B Co., 47th Inf., through the Luchow Forest toward Zadrau where the enemy was reported to have set up his regimental command post. Moving through the woods, the patrol encountered heavy sniper fire. The infantrymen continued mopping up the area during the halt, and C Cos. engineers pulled mines from the road shoulders.

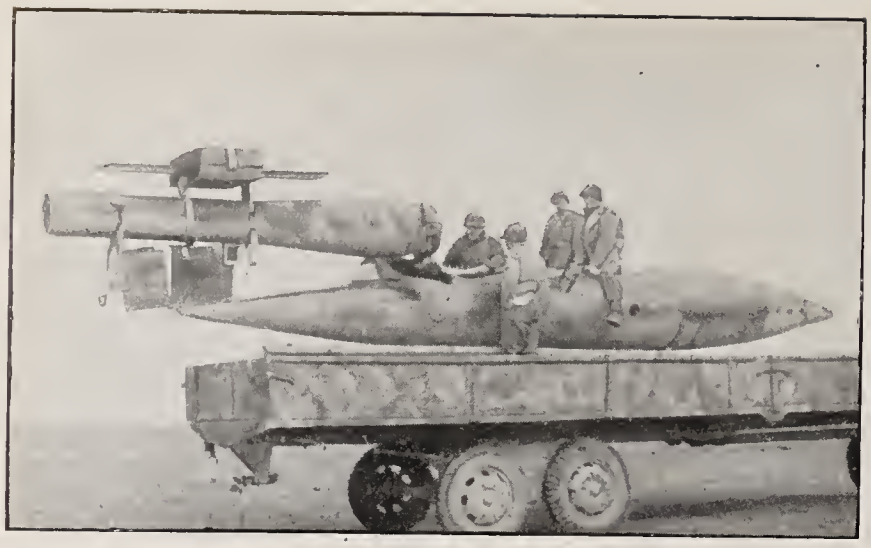
Fight To Dannenberg

It was 1400 before the columns moved out again. Col. Hamberg's troops met with little resistance as they pushed through Tramm and on toward the outskirts of Dannenberg.

The married B's under Col. Boyer found Zadrau bitterly defended by Hitler Jugend troops, some only 14 to 16 years old but fighting with fanatical tenacity. Their sniper fire was unusually accurate, and they continued to fire even when the houses where they had barricaded themselves burned down around them.

Roadblocks and tank traps around Zadrau added to the difficulty of taking the town. The 95th Artillery and the supporting fighter-bombers took over. Zadrau was a mass of smoking rubble when the task force again churned on, turning west toward Heide.

In Heide a Cub plane pilot, flying in the rain ahead of the armored column, spotted six heavy German 88 mm. guns, being towed by prime movers. He radioed the position to the 95th Artillery. The batteries let loose with a barrage on the enemy column. When the tankers and infantrymen of the married B Cos. entered Heide and turned east toward their original route, they found the six demolished 88's, the crews still in their seats where they had been caught by the deadly accuracy of the 95th's shellfire.



Outside of Heide, Task Force Boyer ran into a column of 10 towed nebelwerfers. First encountered by the married A Cos. as they had moved off on the left to contact CC A to the west, the German column had fled east, cut in front of the C Cos. and would have made good their escape had not the B Cos. come thundering up the road at that moment. The tanks blasted the six-barreled mortars, smashed the entire column, and ground on toward Dannenberg.

As the A and C Cos. of Task Force Hamberg moved through Shaafhausen toward the outskirts of Dannenberg, the 2nd Platoon of the C Cos., led by Lt. William J. Caroscio and Lt. Paul Vostic, turned down a side road and came upon a huge, carefully concealed assembly plant for V-1 and V-2 robot bombs. So well camouflaged that it blended into the woods and was almost invisible from the road, the plant consisted of more than 60 separate buildings, roads and railroad sidings. There the men discovered a new and untried German secret weapon, a piloted V-1 bomb complete with cockpit, instrument panel and controls, and a parachute so the pilot could drop to safety after he had trained his bomb on the target.

Col. Hamberg's A and C Cos. were closing in on Dannenberg from the west when anti-tank shells from the vicinity of the town came slamming into the column. The lead tank and two halftracks were knocked out. The armor drew back while 47th infantrymen dismounted and made their way through the forest toward Dannenberg, looking for the gun positions. They found three 88's and two 20 mm. guns, and directed 95th Artillery fire on the positions.

The two task forces remained overnight outside of Dannenberg, prepared to assault the town in the morning. The A and C Cos. bivouacked at Shaafhausen, while the married B Cos. halted at Nebenstedt.

That night the report came that the Germans were hurriedly ferrying reinforcements across the Elbe for the defense of Dannenberg. All available artillery was turned on the town and the ferry sites on the river.

On the morning of April 23, the two task forces moved into Dannenberg, the two married companies of Task Force Hamberg pushing in from the west, and the married B's of Task Force Boyer entering the town from the east. After a brief fire fight, the town put out white flags at 0830.

Now the ferries that had been bringing reinforcements were evacuating the Germans back across the Elbe at Domitz. The 95th batteries turned their fire on these ferry sites.

During the remainder of the day, CC R accepted the surrender of a number of communities in the area. The A and C Cos. cleared the area through Prisser, Riskau and Kabmen; the B Cos. mopped up around Quickborn and Susborn. By late evening, CC R's second drive to the Elbe and final mission in Europe had been completed.

THE ROAD TO GERMANY

Note: Because of time limitations for preparing this book, the full story of the division's history-making 800-mile drive in less than six weeks through France, Belgium, Luxembourg and into Germany can not be told here. The following section is a condensed version of a previously printed booklet telling in broadest possible outlines the division's action from Normandy to the Siegfried Line.

When the 5th Armored plunged into the fight in August 1944 the stakes were high. The invasion forces that had landed on French shores on D—day had forced the defending Germans back in almost two months of bitter fighting. But the pace was slow.

A bold stroke was planned. For the first time in the history of armored warfare a full armored division was to be sent lancing through enemy territory in a spectacular 300—mile exploitation mission to disrupt German forces and trap the enemy.

Fifth Armored tanks began rolling southward on Aug. 2 through the newly-made gap between Coutances and St. Lo. Thus began 15 days and nights of long marches and increasingly tough battles of the drive to Argentan.

All three combat commands catapulted through Ducey and Vitre, then east toward Le Mans. CC A raced to cut the Paris highway northeast of Le Mans; CC R blocked the roads south. CC B entered the town Aug. 9 on the heels of fleeing Germans.

Turning north, two combat commands sped to the Orne River, and the next morning CC A forces crossed near Ballon and CC R at Marolles. Then resistance stiffened. CC A task forces brushed one German armored force north of the Orne, and another the following day at St. Remy du Plain.

By-passing the Perseigne Forest, CC A crossed the Sarthe River and liberated Sees by mid-morning Aug. 12. By midnight the combat command was on the outskirts of Argentan and artillery shells were thundering into the city.

Meanwhile CC R overpowered stubborn forces to cut a path to the north of CC A. CC B took over the Orne River line and CC R fought to the northeast of Sees Aug. 12. By nightfall CC R had blocked main highway junctions south of Gace.

The lower jaw of the Falaise trap snapped shut Aug. 13. CC A stood south of Argentan; CC R held off counterattacks below Gace. Artillery and planes had a field day breaking the spine of the German Seventh Army as it streamed through the gap.

THE EURE-SEINE CAMPAIGNS

Relieved at Argentan and Gace Aug. 15, the division rolled east to cut off German units still west of the Seine. Col. Cole's CC B tank-infantry teams raced toward Dreux Aug. 16, smashed well-prepared enemy positions in the wooded approaches and pushed into the city. CC R cut off Dreux from the north.

Paris lay only 50 miles to the east, but the Victory Division's new objective was to the north. CC A and CC B marched abreast up the corridor between the Eure and Seine Rivers toward Heudebouville, at the junction of the two rivers. In this natural pocket the division trapped thousands of Germans vainly trying to cross the Seine and escape.

CC R seized the heights west of Anet Aug. 19, smashed a German attack at Ivry and a tank concentration at Pacy. CC B patrols, among the first Allied troops to reach the Seine, found Vernon vacated by the enemy on the 21st.

The attack to close the trap opened as CC A began to battle its way 25 miles north in five days of bitter fighting against strong German opposition. It combined with CC B to crush a strong defensive force north of Champenard Aug. 22.

Approaching Heudebouville, CC A forces hammered German columns heading for the Seine, and on the 23rd drove the enemy from a hill a mile below the objective.

Three forces closed in Heudebouville next day. A CC B task force attacked from the left, captured Ingremare. One CC A force drove in from the south; another completed the liberation of Fontaine Bellanger and entered Heudebouville.

The 85th Cavalry took over the area on Aug. 25 and CC A and CC B moved to Mantes for maintenance and rest.

However, CC R was still in action to the south, where it crossed the Mauldre River at Beynes, 12 miles west of Versailles. There Col. Anderson assembled his force Aug. 24 under German interdicting fire and the next day reached the south bank of the Seine to outpost the area between Les Mureaux and Poissy.

The Eure-Seine campaign was at an end. While 5th Armored men paused near Mantes, the 4th Inf. Div. and 2nd French Armored completed the liberation of Paris.

BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG LIBERATED

Paris liberated, the Victory Division moved north through the French capital Aug. 30, and started a lightning drive to the Belgian border, 130 miles north. Resistance was strong from the very outskirts of the city.

The division cut through historic Compiegne Forest, crossed the Oise and Aisne Rivers, then the Somme, moving so rapidly that most reconnaissance was done by artillery planes. On Sept. 2. Gen. Oliver personally led one armored column more than 70 miles in his peep. By midnight the division was at Conde on the Belgian border.

Sept. 4 new orders sent the Victory Division racing southeast to the Meuse River. CC R dashed 96 miles to the edge of Charleville in one day, Sept. 5. Forty-Seventh infantrymen crossed a partially destroyed Meuse River dam under intense fire from a cliff overlooking the bank, then forged ahead and by noon had won the cliff. Five hours later C Co. engineers had laid a 192-foot treadway bridge across the Meuse.

CC R tanks and halftracks turned south and liberated Sedan. CC A established a bridgehead at Pont Maugin, south of Sedan, under heavy enemy fire from heights near Bazeilles. After an all-night battle, the heights were captured and the bridge completed the next day.

The 5th Armored now struck toward Germany, 100 miles to the east. Sept. 9 CC A drove against stubborn resistance from Thonne-le-Thil through 20 miles of Belgium to enter the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and fight to within five miles of Luxembourg City. Moving on a parallel route to the north, CC R drove into central Luxembourg at Useldange.

Outside the Luxembourg capital, CC A destroyed a strong German tank and anti-tank gun force, and the next morning entered the city with little opposition. With them was Prince Felix of Luxembourg, who had accompanied the division in its fighting march through Belgium and Luxembourg and was returning to his capital after more than four years of exile.

Liberation of all Luxembourg was completed the next two days as 5th Armored forces fanned out. CC A drove east from the capital through heavy resistance, clearing the woods north of Hamm and battling German tanks at Neudorf Airport, pushing to Hemstal, 10 miles from the border, on the 12th. Then CC A prepared to defend the Grand Duchy' borders.

Meanwhile, CC B and CC R advanced through central and northern Luxembourg to the German border along the Our River. CC B shot to the north of Diekirch and sent patrols to the border Sept. 10.

At Mersch the 47th Inf. of CC R reached the Alzette River as the highway bridge was blown up. The armor crossed a railroad bridge to overtake and destroy a German column of 87 vehicles north of the town.

GERMANY AND THE SIEGFRIED-LINE

At 1815 on Sept. 11, 1944, a strong patrol from B Troop, 85th, crossed the Our River into Germany and made history. Word flashed back to division, to army, to the world — that the first Americans were fighting on German soil.

For the next three days patrols probed the Siegfried Line and found it manned by small, lightly armed forces. The enemy began building up his strength, however, and the steep hills, mud and defiles threatened to make movement difficult for the tanks.

CC R assembled opposite Wallendorf, prepared to force a crossing that was to be a large-scale diversion, aimed at drawing a large German force from the main First Army penetration near Aachen.

For two days practically all artillery of the division fired across the river into the fortifications. At 1100 on the 14th, CC R started crossing the Our at Wallendorf. Engineer-infantry assault teams crossed the Saur River and advanced to the Our junction at Wallendorf where tanks forded the river, spraying the village with machine gun fire.

Twenty-nine hours later CC R forces stood on Hill 407 near Mettendorf, the last of the pillboxes behind them. Assault teams had worked up the hill, cleaning out concrete pillboxes to make way for oncoming tanks.

Another CC R task force, including a battalion of the 112th Inf. Regt., dashed through German tanks and heavy artillery fire, passing Halsdorf and Stocken, throwing back three strong counterattacks at Wettlingen on the 16th, and smashing an armored attack.

Hill 407 was soon dubbed "Purple Heart Hill" by the GI's. Artillery fell on all sides, patrols constantly filtered to the rear, cutting supply lines. The enemy, meanwhile, built up strength in front. Sept. 19 brought two heavily armored counterattacks, both crushed by CC R's tanks, tank destroyers and artillery. Despite heavy losses, enemy forces poured in, threatening to cut off the combat command. Artillery still fell incessantly.

North of the CC R penetration, CC B had moved into Germany on Sept. 16 and pushed through the enemy defenses against increasing artillery fire and infantry and armored counterattacks.

CC R was finally ordered to recross the Our, passing through CC B forces. The crossing was accomplished during darkness on the 19th. In the CC B area intensified enemy activity continued next day. One task force was withdrawn across the Our successfully. The remaining CC B forces dug in on Hill 375, between Niedersgegen and Ammeldingen, under artillery and mortar fire and infantry attacks.

The engineer bridge built at Wallendorf by C Co. engineers on the 14th had been captured by infiltrating Germans, retaken by 387th AA Bn. men on the 19th, fell into German hands again, and was destroyed on the 21st.

Enemy forces kept closing in around CC B's tightly-ringed defenses. Then the order came to withdraw. On the 21st, CC R's 47th Inf. Bn. infiltrated back into Germany to help cover CC B's movement that night, and by darkness the forces withdrew.

The 5th Armored had left Germany — for the time being — but the troops had accomplished their mission. They had drawn to their sector and contained German forces greatly outnumbering them — powerful and mobile forces that might otherwise have resisted the main assault by other First Army divisions at Aachen.

These forces included a GAF infantry division, a separate infantry regiment, a machine gun battalion, several medium and heavy artillery battalions, a panzer brigade and elements of a panzer lehr division, and the border defense troops first encountered.

A DIVISION IS BORN

The 5th Armd. Div. was born Oct. 1, 1941, at Fort Knox, Ky., home of the Armored Command.

Under Maj. Gen. Jack W. Heard, its first commander, officers and men of the division cadre trained at Knox until Feb. 16, 1942, then moved to newly completed Camp Cooke, Calif. Inductees arrived during March and April to bring the division to full strength.

The division left Camp Cooke Aug. 8 for south-eastern California where it trained in open tank tactics on the vast Mojave Desert. Desert maneuvers over, it returned to garrison training at Cooke Nov. 23.

Gen. Heard was transferred from the division, and Maj. Gen. Lunsford E. Oliver took command March 2, 1943. Gen. Oliver was an officer experienced in armored warfare as fought in World War II. Shortly before he had returned from North Africa where he led Combat Command B of the 1st Armd. Div. in the initial invasion of Oran and the drive east into Tunisia.

For his successful campaign in Tunisia, Gen. Oliver was promoted to major general, awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and returned home to command a division.

Two weeks after Gen. Oliver assumed command, the 5th Armored went east for maneuvers in Tennessee. In July 1943 it moved to Pine Camp in northern New York.

Dec. 6 the division made another move — to Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Penna. Here the men completed unit combat tests, received pre-overseas furloughs and on receipt of movement orders moved to Camp Kilmer, N. J., for staging.

Feb. 10, 1944, men of the 5th Armd. Div. walked up the gangplank in New York. Feb. 24 they disembarked in Liverpool, and went immediately into training at Camp Chiseldon, Ogbourne — St. George and Tidworth — Perham Downes, all in Wiltshire.

In April there came a new job for the division. Its men were called on to operate hundreds of camps and hotels in Cornwall and Devonshire for First Army troops preparing to embark for the invasion of France.

When their charges left England's shores for the invasion of the continent, 5th Armored men returned to their tanks and guns and in bivouac at West Down Camp, Tilshead, Wiltshire, they made their own final preparations for combat. On July 22 the division moved to its assigned marshaling points at Southampton and the following day embarked for France and the job for which it had been preparing for nearly three years.

"V" FOR VICTORY

The nickname, "Victory Division", was adopted upon the division's formation in 1941, at a time when the only defiance of Hitler's occupation in western Europe was that V — symbol of hope among conquered peoples. Since the significant V was also the Roman numeral for the division's number, the 5th Armored became known as the Victory Division.

COMMENDATIONS

To the Commanding General, 5th Armored Division –

15 March 1945

"Prior to its assignment to Ninth U.S. Army, I followed with keen interest the splendid record built up by the 5th Armored Division during its advance across the continent. Thus it was that the recent assignment of this division to this command afforded me extreme pleasure.

"Likewise it was gratifying to me to know that the division was afforded another opportunity to distinguish itself during the Roer to Rhine Campaign just concluded. That full advantage was taken of this opportunity is conclusively proven in the fine performance by the division during the execution of this operation . . . ."

– Lt. Gen. William H. Simpson,
Commanding Ninth U.S. Army

31 January 1945

"Upon the relief of the 5th Armored Division from attachment to this corps, I desire to express to you, and through you, to the officers and men of your command, my personal thanks and appreciation for the excellent manner in which they functioned at all times while under this corps.

"With the exception of a comparatively short period of time, the 5th Armored Division has served with this command since 28 August 1944. It saw considerable action and rendered invaluable service during the pursuit of the enemy through France, Luxembourg and Belgium. Elements of the division were the first Allied troops to enter Germany. . . .

"I accept this loss to this command with regret. My thanks for the excellent job you did go to each and every one of you."

– Maj. Gen. C. R. Heubner,
Commanding V Corps

13 April 1945

"I wish to convey to you, your staff and your command my commendation and entire satisfaction with your rapid advance from the Leine River to the Elbe River. Your advance of approximately 100 miles in one and one-half days through hostile country is an outstanding achievement of this war. It exemplifies energetic leadership, skillful employment of armor, and a high order of execution by your troops.

"The 5th Armored Division by such vigorous execution of all assigned missions has won a high place in the esteem of all ranks of this corps."

– Maj. Gen. A. C. Gillem, Jr.,
Commanding XIII Corps.

7 May 1945

". . . . I wish to convey to you, and through you to the members of your command, my complete satisfaction with the service rendered by the 5th Armored Division. . . .

"The planning and the energetic and efficient execution of all tactical and technical plans by the 5th Armored Division during the advance to the Elbe River contributed greatly to the successful accomplishment of all corps missions."

– Maj. Gen. A. C. Gillem, Jr.,
Commanding XIII Corps.

"....For Outstanding

★ ★ PRESIDENTIAL CITATIONS

Troop A, 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized —

"Troop A, 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action from 15 to 22 December 1944 near Untermaubach, Germany. During a series of attacks eastward from Kleinhau, Germany, onto high ground north of Untermaubach, Troop A, though previously trained and experienced in mounted reconnaissance, exhibited a remarkable adaptability to dismounted infantry tactics and was successful in seizure of its assigned section on Hill 253. In spite of a terrific barrage of enemy artillery and mortars and two savage counterattacks, Troop A held its sector firmly against overwhelming enemy numbers and fire power for a period of four days.

"On 19 December 1944, having suffered 50 per cent losses, the troop was assigned the mission of penetrating to the rear of the enemy outposts and severing the main enemy supply route. The troop, with 50 per cent of its fighting strength suffering battle wounds, deftly cut the supply route and established a road block which it held for three days even though the operation planned relief the first day. Although completely surrounded by strong enemy forces, it decisively defeated a concerted tank-infantry attack thrice its strength, using to defeat the enemy weapons no more powerful than anti-tank grenades.

"One Mark V tank was destroyed after advancing to within 10 yards of the troop's position, while two others shelled the two houses which the troop occupied from a distance of 200 yards. Simultaneously, 75 infantrymen charged the houses but were finally repulsed with losses of 60 enemy killed and six taken prisoner.

"This small force of four officers and 41 enlisted men was responsible for an effective block which cut off large enemy forces from their base of supply and greatly facilitated the capture of these forces and the sector which they held. The troop held the road block against all odds until finally relieved by other friendly forces. The heroism, fighting determination and versatility displayed by the members of Troop A, 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Spuadron Mechanized are worthy of emulation and reflect honor upon the armed forces of the United States."

Performance of Duty...."

AWARDED DIVISION UNITS ★ ★

Companies B and C, 47th Armored Infantry Battalion — *

"Companies B and C, 47th Armored Infantry Battalion, are cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 4 and 5 September 1944. On the night of 4 September 1944, Companies B and C were given the mission of establishing a bridgehead over the Meuse River, east of Charleville, France. In order to do this, a cliff approximately 400 feet high on the north bank of the river had to be taken.

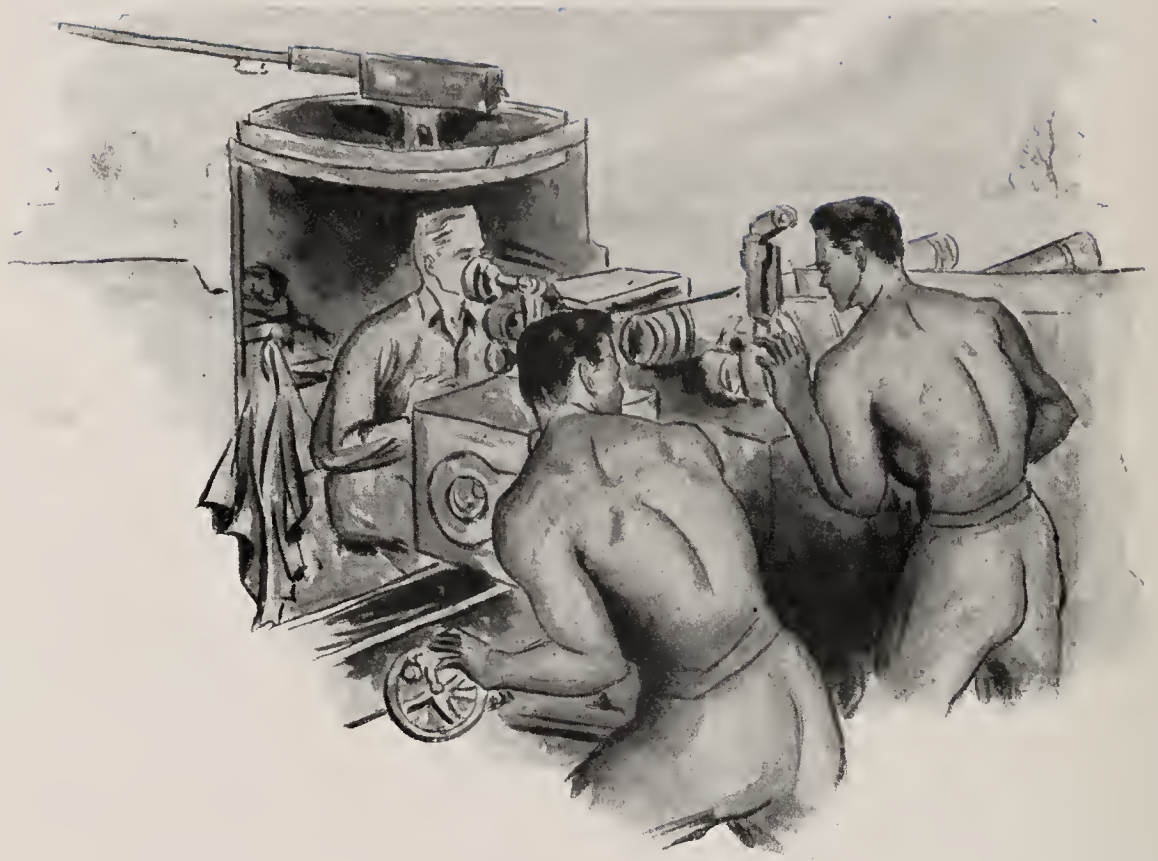
"Although these companies had marched a distance of 96 miles during the period immediately preceding the attack, they dismounted on the south bank of the river and, supported by one battalion of 105 mm. howitzers, one company of medium tanks in initial stages, one platoon of engineers, one platoon of heavy machine guns, one platoon of 81 mm. mortars and one platoon of 75 mm. assault guns, crossed the river on an improvised foot bridge under heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire.

"Immediately after crossing the river and still under devastating enemy fire, the companies reformed and attacked the cliff where concrete fortifications, underground tunnels, and wire entanglements were manned by approximately one company of a panzer division supported by self-propelled 88 mm. guns, anti-aircraft guns, mortars and possibly one battery of 105 mm. artillery. This position was formerly part of the French Maginot Line defenses.

"Companies B and C fought grimly for these, heights repulsing numerous enemy counterattacks until 1200, 5 September 1944, when the enemy was defeated and routed from their positions, due to the gallantry and determination of this company. Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy whereas Company B suffered a total of one killed and 12 wounded and Company C suffered a total of one killed and seven wounded.

"The heroic efforts of Companies B and C, 47th Armored Infantry Battalion, resulted in the defeat of the enemy, the capture of this height and establishment of a bridgehead which enabled an armored combat command to cross the Meuse River and proceed with the attack. Only the will to defeat the enemy in his carefully prepared natural and artificial defenses and the splendid esprit de corps of these companies made possible its achievement, which reflects the highest credit upon the military forces of the United States."

* Since the separate citations for each company are virtually identical, wording of the original citation has been altered slightly by the editors to include both companies.



ARTILLERY

47th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

The 47th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, organic artillery unit supporting CC A, boasts that it fired every mission requested of it despite the many fluid situations encountered.

As the 5th Armored closed the Falaise trap from Argentan, France, the 47th had a field day blasting the fleeing German troops. Battery A was the first division artillery organization to fire into Germany on Sept. 13. Firing over the German border, the battalion picked off a railroad train, a skiff loaded with soldiers, as well as tanks and pillboxes in the Siegfried Line.

In the Hurtgen Forest the artillerymen manned their M–7 howitzers under almost continuous enemy barrages, at one time firing 2000 rounds in 10 hours to break up a German attack, another time laying a heavy defensive fire so that the wounded could be evacuated. In the artillery preparation for the Roer River crossing, the battalion averaged 10 rounds fired per minute for 237 minutes.

The 47th provided close support for CC A throughout the drive through Germany, knocking out troublesome enemy positions, and near the Elbe River laid a heavy barrage on a wooded area which brought about the surrender to the battalion of the staff of the ill-fated Von Clausewitz Panzer Div.

The 47th is commanded by Lt. Col. John B. Rosenzweig.

71st Armored Field Artillery Battalion

The 71st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, although regularly assigned as the supporting artillery unit for CC B, has seen action with all the 5th Armored combat commands.

The 71st battled its way across France with CC B, but aided the 95th Artillery in battering the Germans fleeing the Falaise trap, supported the XV Corps crossing the Seine, and worked with CC R in the drive through Belgium to Luxembourg.

Battling in the Siegfried Line with CC B, the battalion at one time laid fire in four

directions at once as infiltrating enemy troops closed in around the combat command. German prisoners estimated that the shellfire inflicted 50 per cent casualties among the attacking forces.

The battalion supported CC B during the bitter fighting for the Roer River, and fired 2430 rounds within a few hours Feb. 23 in support of the Ninth Army crossing of that river. During the fighting across Germany it chopped open the way for the tanks and halftracks.

At Tangermunde the battalion placed time fire over the important Elbe River bridge, then smashed the town after its defenders refused to surrender. The 71st played an important part in the destruction of the Germans' ill-fated Von Clausewitz Panzer Div.

The battalion is commanded by Lt. Col. Israel B. Washburn.

95th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

The 95th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was a member of the CC R fighting team through the battles across the European continent, but men of the battalion did their biggest job on the historic morning of Feb. 23 when, supporting an infantry unit's attack across the Roer River, the battalion's 105 mm. howitzers fired 2700 rounds in four hours and 40 minutes.

When several enemy 88 mm. guns and large stores of ammunition were captured on the banks of the Rhine, the artillerymen formed an additional battery and blasted the enemy in and around Duisberg with his own shells.

Moving behind the tankers and infantrymen, the 95th artillerymen often met the enemy face-to-face. Near Courtomer, France, the battalion position was attacked by 20 enemy tanks and more than 400 infantrymen. M—7 howitzers fired directly into the German force and the artillerymen with rifles, machine guns and bazookas beat off the attack, destroying nine enemy tanks and killing and wounding a large number of the attackers.

During the fighting in the Siegfried Line the battalion not only received heavy enemy counter-battery fire, but also repulsed several German attacks that penetrated into the unit's position. In the fighting through the Hurtgen Forest to the Roer, the 95th expended 35,000 rounds of ammunition.

Lt. Col. James W. McNeer commands the 95th.

628th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Self Propelled)

Tank busters of the 628th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Self Propelled) have fought with the 5th Armored since they were attached to the division Aug. 2 as it entered combat.

The battalion's M-36 tank destroyers that look like tanks but carry long 90 mm. guns can knock out the toughest Royal Tigers, crumble pillboxes or double as artillery pieces.

In action, A Co. was attached to CC A, B Co. was with CC B and C Co. with CC R. Within the combat commands, also, the TD companies were divided up, with a platoon attached to each "married" company to help out when heavy firepower was needed.

When the tanks and infantry were out of action and only artillery was firing, the tank busters became artillerymen and fired their long guns beside the 105 mm. howitzers of the armored field artillery battalions.

Biggest day for the TD men was Sept. 19, during the fighting in the Siegfried Line. In one 24-hour period, B and C Cos. destroyed six Mark VI's, one Mark V and four unidentified tanks, reported as probably destroyed six other Mark VI's and a Mark V, and helped smash five more unidentified German tanks.

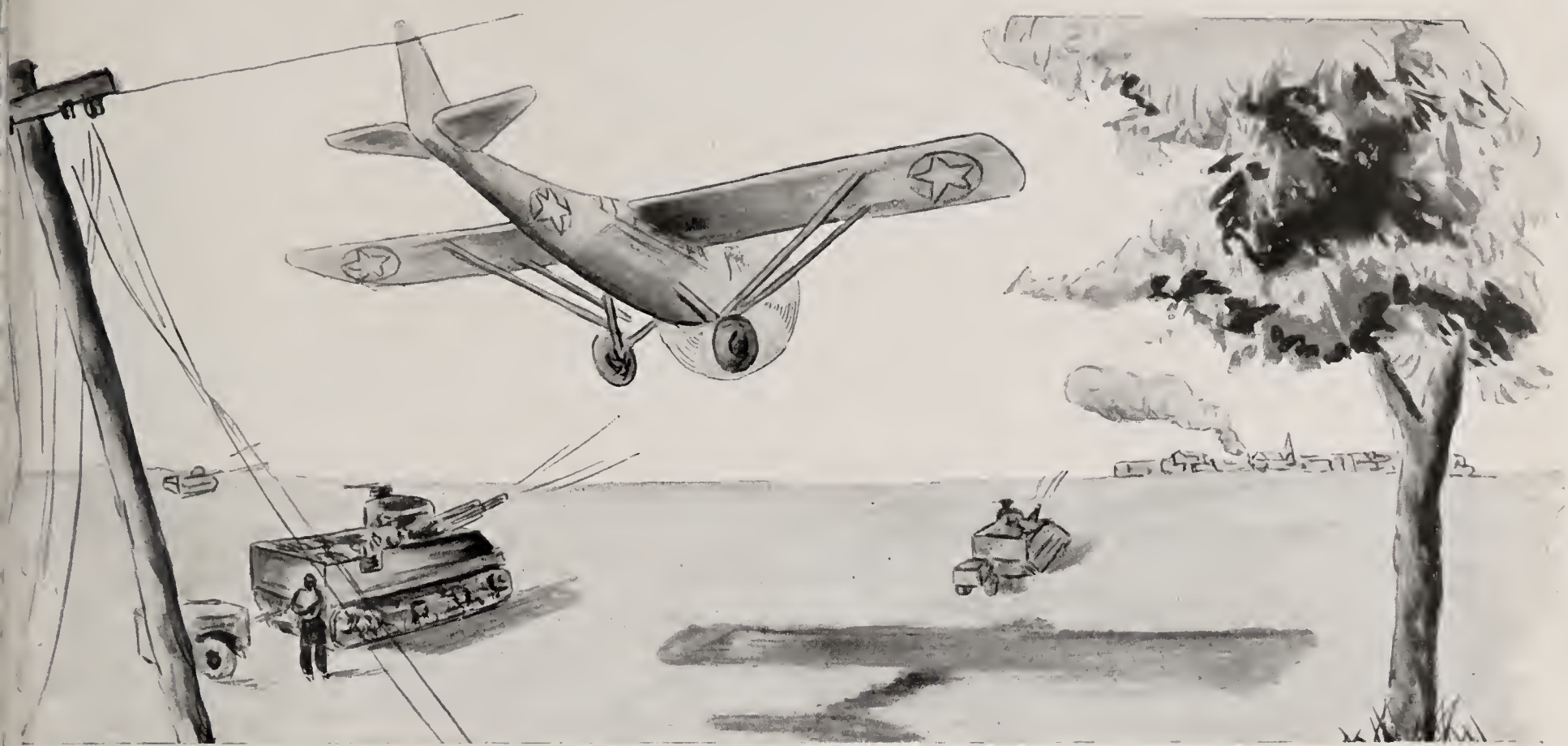
Detached from the division during the battle of the "Bulge," the battalion fought with the 3rd Armd. Div. and the 82nd Airborne Div. from Dec. 23 to Jan. 11, and returned to the 5th Armored Jan. 27 to take part in the fighting across Germany.

The battalion's first commander, Lt. Col. William M. Hernandez, was killed in action in France and the battalion has since been commanded by Lt. Col. William J. Gallagher.

387th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion

Attached to the 5th Armd. Div. to keep the Luftwaffe away or make it sorry it came, the "ack-ack" men of the 387th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion (Self Propelled) proved themselves versatile fighters. Their multiple .50 caliber machine guns and 37 mm. automatic guns, when not knocking down German planes, frequently proved their effectiveness against ground targets.

Landing in France June 29, the 387th guarded Cherbourg until it was attached to the 5th Armored Aug. 1 and began the fight across the European continent. The AA



batteries were attached to the field artillery battalions and two days later were tangling with German planes making the first of a number of sporadic raids which continued throughout the campaigns, even after the 5th Armored had reached the Elbe River.

But the AA guns, mounted on halftracks, also found ground targets in hedgerows, buildings and church towers, and helped break up enemy infantry attacks. At Wallendorf Sept. 19, men of the 387th recaptured from the Germans a vitally important bridge on the supply route to troops fighting in the Siegfried Line.

The record for the battalion, as announced by the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Elmer I. Kenneweg, is 56 planes definitely destroyed and 30 "probables".

Cubs and Artillery Observers

Forward observers on the ground and Cub pilots and observers in the air work together as eyes of the artillery. From them comes the information that sends the division's. artillery crashing down on the enemy, clearing the way for the tankers and infantrymen'

Although the Cub pilots wear wings, and received their basic flying training from the Air Corps, they are first, last and always artillerymen. When aerial observers are not available the Cub pilots take off in their tiny planes to act as both pilot and observer. Utterly without protection, the pilots and observers are at the mercy of enemy small arms, and when they are attacked by enemy planes, their only hope is to outfly them.

Flying column cover for the speeding combat commands is one of their big jobs and often they have spotted strong enemy positions and reported them in time for the column to bypass or better prepare to attack the position. Often the Cubs spot and destroy targets before the tankers and infantrymen ever see them.

The forward observers on the ground are always in front. Sometimes they operate from tanks or peeps in the lead platoon. Sometimes they go forward on foot and relay commands back, but they are always with the lead troops.

The forward observer must always know exactly where he is at all times on his map. On him rests the terrible responsibility of firing within a few hundred yards of his own troops and even a small mistake could mean the death of his own men.

The tankers and infantrymen of the 5th Armored could always find their artillery observer in the front lines when the going was toughest.

Eyes and ears of the 5th Armd. Div. are the troops of the 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized. Filling that difficult role, the recon men do everthing from slugging it out as infantry to reconnoitering roads at 50 miles an hour.

The recon troops, built as speedy, lightweight fighting units, weren't designed to stand up and punch toe to toe with the heavy stuff, but they've done that, too. They try to dodge and weave and outbox the enemy, keeping him off balance until the heavier hitting tank-infantry teams arrive. While their fast reconnaissance cars and peeps needle the Germans from the sides and rear, the recon radio nets crackle with enemy information going back to the combat commands.

The 85th doesn't always fight according to the book. In December, E Troop left its basic weapon, the 75 mm. assault gun, to slog in the mud of Hurtgen Forest as infantrymen. Men of one of the fleet reconnaissance outfits, D Troop, also fought as infantrymen when they left their reconnaissance cars to fight inch by inch forward through mines, snipers and artillery to the Roer River. Other troops of the squadron added their weight to the Hurtgen Forest battle as infantrymen and the squadron proved itself in a new role.

F Co., set up like a light tank company, is the squadron's Sunday punch in a fire fight. Attached to CC B and employed as a full company, it helped destroy the Von Clausewitz Div. which was chewing up supply lines after the fight to the Elbe River. F Co. also solved the hardest supply problem the division has ever faced when it carried ammunition and food into the Hurtgen Forest in armored vehicles and evacuated wounded on the way out.

Recon Does Everything

Workhorses of the squadron are the reconnaissance troops, A, B, C and D. They outpost, reconnoiter roads, find bridges and new routes and screen, or protect, the flanks of the advancing combat commands. Screening is a nice-sounding word, but it sometimes means that a platoon of reconnaissance troops must hold off a battalion of the enemy until help can arrive. During the Rhine to Elbe fight, C Troop was given a screening mission north of the division's advance and set up a system of listening posts with bazooka men and machine guns and roving patrols to prevent the Germans from attacking the division's columns on the flanks.

Getting information about the enemy and then getting it back is the primary job of the reconnaissance troops, and that's why they have more radios than any other outfit in the division. When B Troop started out to locate the elusive Von Clausewitz Div. it finally tracked down a large column going into a woods and radioed back the exact location. Soon artillery and the Air Corps were pounding the spot, and the next day 77 smashed German vehicles were found in the woods.

Like all the other troops, Headquarters and Service Troops did outstanding jobs. Supply trucks ran over 120,000 miles delivering supplies, communications men strung wires and kept radios operating 24 hours a day.

The squadron has had three commanders. Lt. Col. Kent Fay was killed in action in France, and Major John T. Gerald died in action, leading a recon platoon in Germany. Lt. Col. George C. Benjamin has commanded the squadron since October, 1944.

ENGINEERS

Most versatile troops of the 5th Armd. Div. are the men of the 22nd Armored Engineer Battalion. They build the bridges, clear minefields, maintain roads, demolish pill-boxes, provide drinking water for the division and even fight as infantrymen.

Commanded by Lt. Col. Fred E. Ressegieu, the 22nd Engineers operate in combat with the three combat commands, A, B and C Cos. being attached to CC A, CC B and CC R respectively.

During the fighting in France, the engineers made history, constructing hundreds of feet of treadway bridge and removing minefields and road blocks to carry the 5th Armored to the Seine. There they demolished locks on the river to cut the German escape route. First American troops to reach the Seine were members of a 22nd Engineer water point crew.

While A Co. was cracking road blocks and removing mines in the Compiegne Forest, B Co. bridged the Oise River for the division's sweep to Belgium. Near Conde, Pvt. Thomas E. King alone held off a German motor convoy untill he was mortally wounded. He was the first 22nd man to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Co. C built the first bridge across the Meuse River, one of three spans the 22nd Engineers constructed over that river. The same company built the all-important bridge at Wallendorf, Germany, which carried the first American forces to breach the Siegfried Line. The 22nd Engineers not only prepared the fords and bridges into Germany, but also destroyed 103 pillboxes.

More Headaches for the Engineers

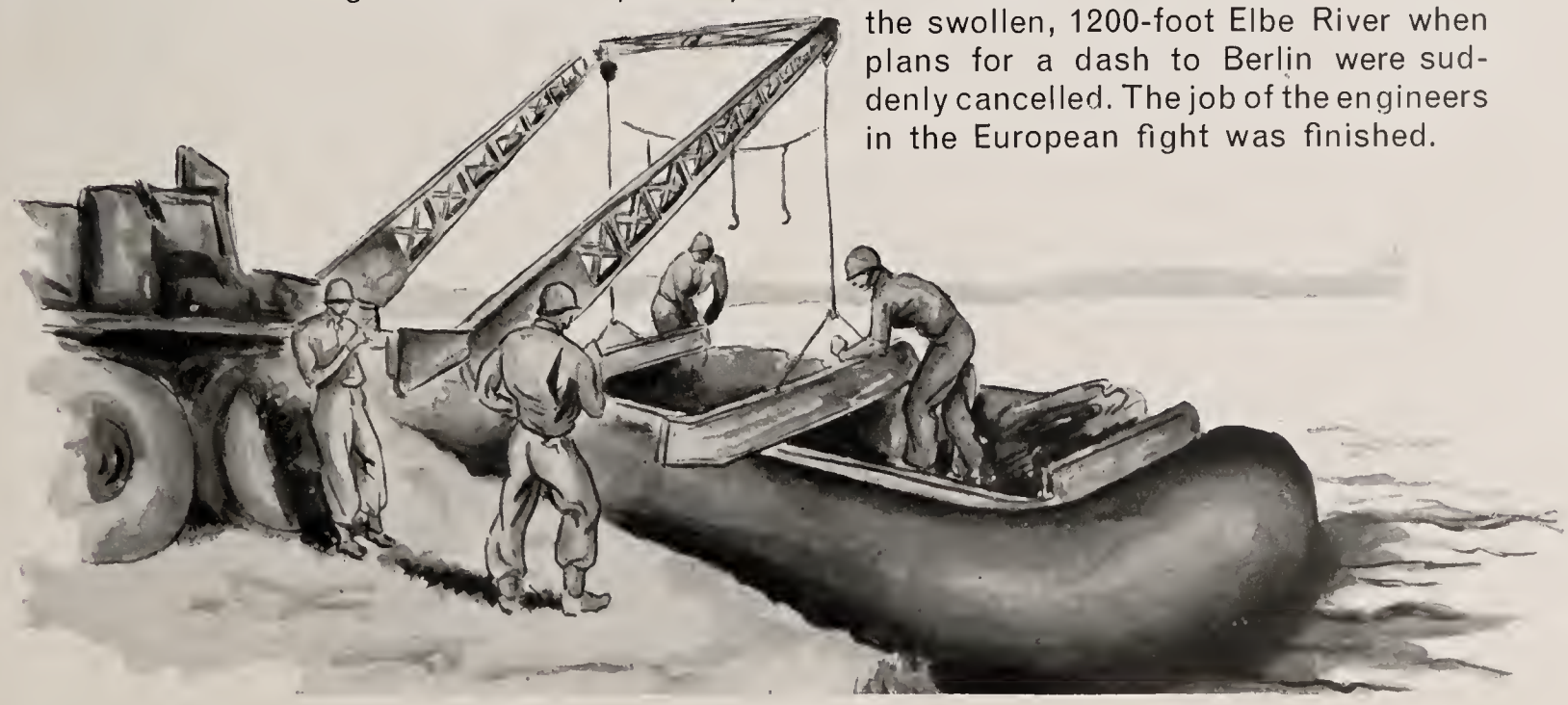
The next few months were an engineer's nightmare. Maintaining muddy, overworked roads kept engineer crews and bulldozers busy in every part of the division area. Through their efforts the main supply route and important arteries were kept open at all times.

In Hurtgen Forest the engineers, in the roughest, most bitter mission they had undertaken, removed mines from roadways and filled shell craters, clearing the way for tanks and supplies to move up. After crossing the Roer, Col. Ressegieu's engineers again used their mine detectors and TNT to keep the roads clear and smooth the way for the 5th Armored sprint to the Rhine.

Across the Rhine the engineers found themselves out in front again. Capt. Charles Perlman's C Co. crossed the Ems Canal with the infantry and constructed a treadway bridge in record time. Further north A Co., under Capt. Thomas Grose, also bridged the Ems. Then followed the dash to the Weser River where B Co., commanded by Capt. Rolf E. Mickelson, constructed a 372-foot treadway bridge despite mud, rain and heavy artillery fire.

The engineers played their usual important role in the division's sweep from the Weser to the Elbe. Removing mines was particularly costly as the combat commands neared the Elbe, but tankers relied on the engineers and were never stopped in their forward drive. During this operation a platoon of B Co., protecting the division's supply lines with CC B, was instrumental in effecting the surrender of the staff of the raiding Von Clausewitz Div.

The 22nd Engineers had completed plans for an assault crossing and bridging of the swollen, 1200-foot Elbe River when plans for a dash to Berlin were suddenly cancelled. The job of the engineers in the European fight was finished.



THE MEDICS

Whenever the 5th Armd. Div. got into a fight, it was "Medics! Medics!"

Tankers sounded that cry when an 88 crashed through their armor. When mortars or machine guns caught an infantry man, engineer or artilleryman, it was "Medics! Medics!"

Trained enlisted men or medical officers ran to the vehicle, ditch or foxhole from which the cry came. Out of special pouches on each hip they pulled life-saving, pain relieving supplies — tourniquets, bandages, morphine. As the noises of battle blared all around, they stopped the bleeding, splinted the fractures, eased the pain. Gently they lifted the wounded men onto litters and into ambulances attached to each column. The ambulances speedily carried the wounded back to the 75th Medical Battalion, Armored, and the 75th took them farther to evacuation hospitals.

Sometimes, through France, the advance was so fast that ambulances of the 75th could not start back immediately to hospitals and they became a rolling hospital on the road. Plasma bottles swung from the tops of ambulances, pouring life-giving fluid into the veins of the wounded. At the first opportunity the ambulances raced to the rear, drivers making round trips as far as 250 miles.

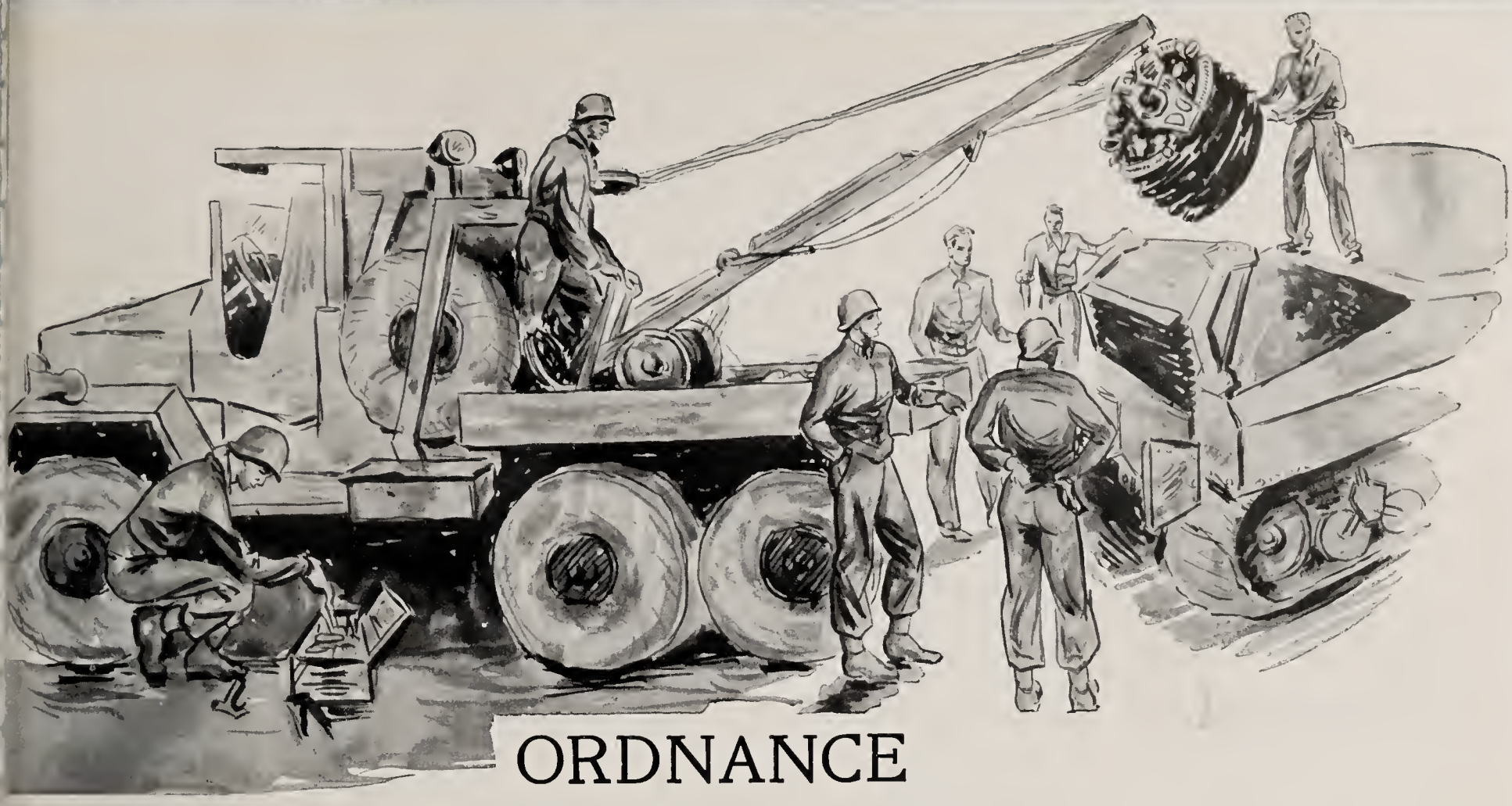
At Wallendorf, when the 5th Armored was the first division to enter Germany, it was "Medics! Medics!" Armored doughboys of CC B and CC R spread the cry as the Germans poured artillery into them in the Siegfried Line. Aid men pulled the wounded out of foxholes and surgeons worked miracles in the big surgical trucks and tents of the 75th.

Artillery boomed and screamed around the vehicles marked with the Red Cross, rattling shrapnel through surgical trucks and ambulances. Yet most of the casualties had their wounds bound and the ambulances rolled back on their life-saving journeys.

In the Hurtgen Forest it was "Medics! Medics!" Artillery was so heavy that frequently the aid men could not crawl to a wounded man's foxhole. Instead they rode in tanks. They pulled the wounded out of their cold, water-filled holes, lifted them into tanks and took them back to a crude aid station for treatment. Ambulances couldn't make it through the shelling by day, but carried their wounded at night, churning steadily back to the 75th clearing stations. Here the men were treated and their pain eased. The men with trench foot had their shoes cut off their purplish, swollen feet. Twenty minutes later they were on the move again, rolling back in ambulances to the comfort of an evacuation hospital.

In the battles of the Roer River and Cologne Plain and the division's 260-mile drive from the Rhine to the Elbe in 13 days, the staccato cry rang through the air at almost every fight, "Medics! Medics!" In the drive to the Elbe, a nest of 88's caught the half-tracks and tanks of a spearheading column and wounded 18 doughboys. Lt. Col. Joseph O. Boydstone, division surgeon, riding in the rear of the column, raced forward in his peep and helped evacuate the wounded men under fire.

From July, when the division landed in France, until V—E Day, the 75th Medical Battalion, under Lt. Col. Benjamin H. Bader, and later under Major R. J. Winkler, treated 10,346 patients, including plenty of wounded Germans. Members of the battalion won six Silver Star Medals, 43 Bronze Star Medals, 35 Purple Hearts and a Croix de Guerre. In the unit medical detachments, dozens of other awards for heroism in action were won by the officers and men who were up there in the midst of the fight all the time, ready to answer when they heard a soldier cry, "Medics! Medics!"



ORDNANCE

Whether it's dismantling a 45-ton tank or repairing a delicate watch, it's all in the day's work for the 127th Ordnance Maintenance Battalion. They have the huge job of keeping the division's 2400 vehicles and 1000 trailers in shipshape running order. In addition, they keep in repair and adjustment the division's 7100 carbines and rifles, 1200 machine guns, 2800 sub-machine guns, 84 anti-tank guns, 221 tank guns, more than 80 artillery pieces and other assorted weapons in the division. They top this off with watch repairing, fixing stoves, modifying tanks and other vehicles, repairing fire control optical instruments and ordering, issuing and installing astronomical amounts of spare parts.

During the division's rushing breakthrough in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, the 127th Ordnance worked under terrible handicaps of time, often setting up in open fields in deep mud and snow, but the work went on and the fighting equipment was delivered to the front on time.

Detachments from A, B and C Cos. were attached to the three combat commands and brought their shops right up to the firing line to save time. Even under fire the ordnance men had to work with exacting measurements and nothing left their shops until it was perfect, for upon the performance of the tank or gun they sent back into the line might depend a man's life.

Men of the battalion were the first ordnance troops into Germany when advance detachments of B and C Cos. followed their combat commands into the Siegfried Line at Wallendorf in September, 1944. Here they repaired and evacuated ordnance equipment in full view of the German guns which were located on commanding heights.

When the 5th Armd. Div. crossed the Rhine and struck out on its 230-mile fight to the Elbe, ordnance followed as closely as it could, repairing tanks and equipment on the side of the road, in fields, in buildings, under any conditions, but always finishing the job and rushing the badly needed equipment up to the front. On this long drive ordnance had to fight the problem of fixing a tank one day and finding the tank company to whom it belonged, 100 miles farther into Germany, the next day. Working a 24-hour shift to deliver the goods, ordnance produced the equipment when and where it was needed no matter how far the advance.

During nine months of combat the ordnance battalion repaired 1422 tanks and other combat vehicles and 1826 general purpose vehicles. During that time more than 1500 tons of spare parts were handled and issued by them, all of this in a period when the battalion moved its heavy equipment more than 35 times, or an average of once a week.

"Let no 5th Armored soldier say his vehicle or gun ever let him down," has always been in the minds of the 127th Ordnance men as they worked, and their record shows they have lived up to their standards.

Lt. Col. Roland S, Biersach is the battalion commander.

Q. M. TRUCK

Only colored troops to wear the shoulder patch of the 5th Armd. Div. are the men of the attached 3907th and 3912th Quartermaster Truck Companies who bring up the vital gasoline, ammunition and other supplies that keep the division fighting.

It's a hard, grueling grind, highballing the 2½-ton, six-wheeled cargo trucks and their heavily-loaded trailers over the rutted, battle-scarred roads of France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, but the truckers can boast that they never let the division down — that the 5th Armored has never run short of necessary supplies however far the supply lines may have been extended during the division's swift advances. During action one truck platoon moves with each combat command; the remainder are attached to Division Trains.

Up at the front bringing gasoline to the forward tank units, or rolling through enemy-infested rear areas, these men have seen plenty of the shooting. They lost a number of trucks that were destroyed by enemy fire, including four from the 3907th which were trapped in a German ambush while following up the armor in the drive toward the Elbe.

Eleven 3912th truckers hold the Bronze Star Medal, while in the 3907th, five have been awarded that decoration, five received the Purple Heart Medal for battle wounds and eight hold individual citations.

Since joining the division only a few days after it was committed to action back in Normandy, the 3912th has clocked 825,000 truck miles over the roads of the European continent, and the 3907th is close behind with 785,000 truck miles recorded — a total distance of more than 64 times around the equator.

The truckers claim to be the first colored troops in Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, as well as the first Negro soldiers to enter Paris in World War II.

Commanding the 3907th is Capt. Charles H. Dudley. Capt. Joseph L. Ziolkowski is in command of the 3912th.

MILITARY POLICE

The MP's took a beating at Wallendorf. At one control point, five out of six men directing traffic were wounded. As one man was hit, another immediately took his place from nearby foxholes. During the Hurtgen Forest fighting, the platoon had 52 traffic control points set up. On one narrow, one-way road under almost continuous enemy fire, MP's with field phones directed traffic from shell holes, halting the vehicles during bombardments, then rushing them through when a rare lull occurred.

These men, part of the Traffic Section of the division's Military Police Platoon, direct and coordinate the movements of the division. In combat their posts were bridges and crossroads, main bottlenecks of an advance but also prime targets for the enemy. The section is commanded by Lt. Manuel P. Ashkenas.

The other half of the MP force is the Police Section under Lt. Peter J. O'Neil, who has men with each combat command to collect prisoners and move them to the division prisoner of war enclosure. There other MP's prepared the PW's for questioning and guarded them until they could be evacuated.

In two days in April, 6000 PW's were evacuated. Because of the small number of MP's available, it was not uncommon for one MP to guard 2000 prisoners. The PW enclosure was often left far behind the racing armored columns, in the midst of bypassed enemy troops.

These difficult jobs of traffic control, evacuation of enemy prisoners and policing the civilian population are coordinated and controlled by the Division Provost Marshal, Major Alexander Nelsen. Twenty MP's earned the Bronze Star Medal in combat.

MILITARY GOVERNMENT

Immediately behind, sometimes with, the tankers and infantrymen as they entered a German town came the Military Government Section (later called the G—5 Section), to assist the fighting troops in controlling the civilians. Sometimes, as at Wittingen and Bad Oynhausen, the MG men were there before the combat troops.

Operating as "Civil Affairs" under Major John W. Sampier in friendly countries, this specialist group later under Major Alfred E. Baldrige became the MG Section upon entering Germany, when it began governing the civilians in a hostile land.

Security was their principal objective during combat. MG men, entering a town, ordered the civilian population indoors, ordered prisoners surrendered (374 were so taken between the Rhine and the Elbe), posted regulations and ordered the burgermeister to have streets and roadblocks cleared, communication lines severed and firearms collected. Sometimes a "Squawkie," a tank with a loudspeaker, was used.

When the troops stopped long in an area, the MG men regulated circulation of civilians, selected temporary officials and met innumerable problems for the civilians whose economy had been disrupted by war.

Handling and caring for masses of displaced persons — those unfortunate people taken from their home countries by the Germans — has been MG's biggest job. The Germans were made to furnish food, shelter, clothing and medical care until these "DP's" could be returned to their homes.

TRAINS

"There's nothing glamorous about changing a final drive in an M–4 tank," someone once said, and it's true. It is just hard, tedious, unpraised, necessary work. Doing the glamorless jobs that keep an armored division on the roll is the mission of Division Trains. The work of the service elements of the division, grouped together as the Division Trains, must be done smoothly, efficiently and with a minimum of interruptions, for if Trains should stop working the great, roaring, rampaging armored columns would come to a meek halt.

During action the Division Trains, commanded by Lt. Col. Karl L. Scherer, was confronted with the conflicting necessities of giving close support and yet remaining far enough back so as not to require additional combat elements for protection.

One solution to the problem was to attach to each combat command advance detachments from the letter companies (A, B and C Cos.) of the 127th Ordnance Maintenance Bn., the letter companies of the 75th Medical Bn., platoons of the 3907th and 3912th Quartermaster Truck Cos., and sections of the 145th Signal Co. These detachments worked close to the front lines, often under fire.

One element of the Division Trains, the Division Quartermaster, usually functioned as an independent command so that supplies were always available to the combat troops. Lt. Col. Charles W. Neuendorf's mobile Division Quartermaster Office with its stocks, records and attached 3907th Quartermaster Truck Co. platoon, maintained its supply dump between the division's combat elements and the army depots.

Division Trains Headquarters Company and the Division Band, which had laid aside its musical instruments during combat, reconnoitered for bivouac areas, furnished guards far out of proportion to their strength, and supplied guides along the route of each advance. The remining elements of Division Trains – the personnel sections, Special Staff sections, Army Post Office, signal, ordnance, supply and maintenance sections were prepared to function immediately after entering a bivouac area.

Trains Barely Miss the Bulge

Division Trains left Waismes, Belgium, only four days before von Rundstedt's Ardennes offensive. There followed a two-week stay at Zweifal, Germany, during a time when German paratroopers were being dropped behind American lines. In this period the personnel sections doubled in brass – searching the woods for paratroopers by day and keeping their records at night by candlelight.

Moving to the vicinity of Verviers and Pepinster, Belgium, on Dec. 27, the Trains units at last found sufficient "hard standings" to carry on the work of repairing and replacing the damage of the previous months' campaigns. V–1 and V–2 bombs rumbled overhead as the worked.

Division Trains crossed the Roer River March 2, three days after the rest of the division, and rolled over the Rhine bridge on Easter Sunday. From that point, Division Trains kept as close to the combat elements as road priorities and the great speed of the combat commands would permit.

Trains moved from the Rhine to the Weser April 3, and on to the Elbe April 13, with just enough time in between to catch up on the maintenance, records and supply of the division. The movements were complicated by the presence of forward elements of two infantry divisions on the roads. At the Dortmund–Ems Canal, Division Trains lost out to the infantry when it was ordered off the road by three generals as it was trying to sneak its 10-mile column quietly across the bridge which had been built by CC A engineers.

With the cessation of hostilities, Division Trains continued operational, for its work – vehicular and signal maintenance, preparation of records and operation of medical services – never ends.

DIVISION HEADQUARTERS

Brain and nerve center of the 5th Armd. Div. is the Division Headquarters, Forward and Rear Echelons.

Forward Echelon is the tactical headquarters of the Commanding General, the General Staff and those directly concerned with the conduct of the fighting. In the Rear Echelon are the administrative offices which maintain the vast amount of records and reports of the division. In the Rear Echelon, also, are supervised the various non-tactical services of the division headquarters.

Closely behind the fighting elements move the halftracks, trucks and peeps of the Forward Echelon. Into this headquarters flow orders from higher headquarters, reports on the progress of the fighting, a mass of information concerning the enemy, reports on the division's strength in personnel and materiel and the availability of supplies. Here this information is correlated to form the basis for the Commanding General's plan of action. Here the decisions are made, and from this headquarters the orders covering all phases of the operation go out by radio, wire, liaison officer and messenger to the troops.

To speed communication with the fighting elements and enable the Division Commander to reach the front positions quickly, the Forward Echelon was kept well forward during action. Defending it was the Headquarters Co. Defense Platoon of light tanks and infantry halfracks.

In addition to the Division Commander and his General Staff, the Forward Echelon includes the Chemical Warfare Officer, Signal Officer, Military Government Officer, Assistant Division Engineer and, during combat, the Forward Administrative Control Officer.

Administrative center of the division, located in the Rear Echelon, is the office of the Adjustant General, Lt. Col. C. C. De Vault. This section maintains files and prepares the division's records, publishes the general and special orders and conducts the huge volume of correspondence carried on by the division.

With the Rear Echelon, also, are the offices and staffs of the Judge Advocate, Inspector General, Division Surgeon, Division Chaplain, Special Service Officer, Red Cross Field Director and Army Postal Officer.

Personnel officers and company clerks of all the division units and many attached units as well, whose duty it is to maintain the records of officers and men and carry on the unit administrative functions, are attached to the Rear Echelon during action so they may work with a minimum of interruptions from enemy action.

One of the first division rear echelons to move so closely behind the combat elements, the 5th Armored's Rear Echelon travels with Division Trains, often following close behind the Forward Echelon. As a result, it had taken a number of prisoners from among the enemy troops by-passed by the speeding armored columns.

Unlike the Forward Echelon, the Rear Echelon has no defense unit, but had to provide its own guards from among the clerks and drivers.

THE CHAPLAINS

The forward observer was having a tough time trying to keep the artillery fire on German soldiers who were appearing on all sides like ants swarming out of an ant hill when someone tapped him on the shoulder. Turning, he saw that it was the chaplain. "I was just giving you the blessing," said the officer with the cross on his collar. "You keep the shells flying and I'll do the praying."

But the chaplain did more than pray. When all but one of the surgical sections were withdrawn from this particularly hot section of the Siegfried Line, he stayed with the remaining medics, helping to carry litters and evacuate the wounded. He was one of the last to leave when the troops were withdrawn under heavy shellfire.

Men at war are always in need of spiritual support. Throughout the Victory Division's rough and stormy career, its chaplains have always been at the side of the fighting men, administering to their spiritual needs and sharing their dangers and hardships.

During the drive across the European continent, all sorts of strange places have served as their churches: beer and dance halls, movie houses and stables. But more often the services were held in open fields, during rain and snow storms, with a portable field organ resting in the mud or an altar on the hood of a peep. Often these services were interrupted by the whine of incoming shells. When the men were too busy to attend services, the chaplains visited them at the foxholes and tanks.

When the fighting was heavy, the chaplains were never far behind the assault troops, at the collection stations for the wounded, giving aid and comfort to the men, and frequently visiting the forward aid stations.

For their meritorious service in action, nine of the division's chaplains have been awarded the Bronze Star Medal and one received the Purple Heart Medal for battle wounds. In charge of the 5th Armd. Div. chaplains is Lt. Col. Harold H. Schulz (Protestant). Major John H. Callahan (Catholic) is assistant division chaplain.

Since the 5th Armored has no Jewish chaplain, the Christian chaplains arrange the services for those of the Jewish faith, which are conducted by officers or enlisted men of the division.

SIGNAL

Two men grope in the darkness, trying to find the broken ends of a black, muddy wire beside a dark road.

"Damn those tanks; why don't they stay on the road?"

The groping goes on foot by foot, yard by yard, over the lines laid such a short time before. The open end is finally found, quickly repaired. "Hell, Volley. Try the line now — What! You're moving in 10 minutes? Okay. Dammit, get the map, Brown; we're laying another line."

So goes the life of the wire men of the 145th Armored Signal Company who follow the fast-rolling tank columns as they link combat command communications to the nerve centers of the division.

Bustling peeps, trailing wire from spinning reels, going up virgin roads without benefit of reassuring "Roads and Shoulders Clear of Mines" signs; harrassed, tired switchboard operators struggling with scrambled boards with too many lines; message center men running the wheels off their peeps to deliver the goods; CW radio men hunched over their keys, pounding out messages throughout the night — all are part of the 145th Signal that gets the messages through.

Signal Is Everywere In The Division

The signal company had its fingers in every part of the division. Eleven of these fingers were the regular detachments, sent from the parent signal company to all major units within the division. Fighting, living and sleeping with the combat commands, the reconnaissance, the artillery, the rear units, they never got back to home base, but stayed out there to insure that communications were maintained.

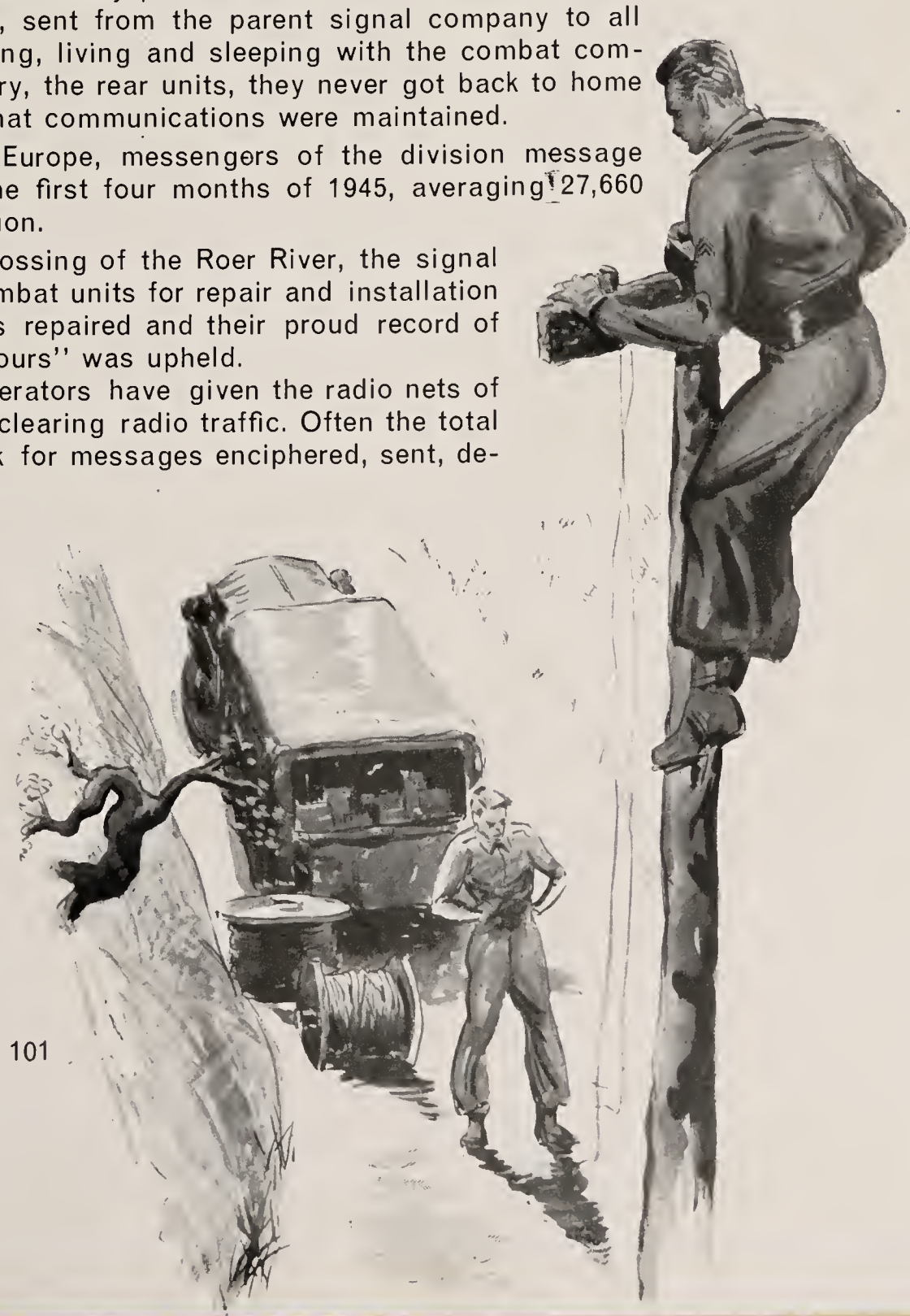
Among the most-traveled men in Europe, messengers of the division message center carried 115,741 items during the first four months of 1945, averaging 27,660 miles per month in servicing the division.

In the two months following the crossing of the Roer River, the signal company met all demands of the combat units for repair and installation of radio sets. A total of 1685 sets was repaired and their proud record of "No set deadlined for more than 24 hours" was upheld.

Patient, skilled, persistent radio operators have given the radio nets of the division a magnificent record in clearing radio traffic. Often the total per radio set passed the hundred mark for messages enciphered, sent, decoded and delivered in one day.

Signalmen have hauled a huge total of supplies — 633,365 pounds — since the start of operations. Signal supply men have often made trips of 300 miles to bring up thousands of miles of wire, truckloads of batteries, message books, radios and hundreds of other items needed to maintain communications.

Company commander of the 145th Signal is Capt. Glenn A. Welde. The Division Signal Officer is Lt. Col. Erling J. Foss.



MILITARY INTELLIGENCE TEAMS

Photo Interpretation Team N. 66

The PI team has saved countless lives and insured the success of many operations by pinpointing enemy defenses and interpreting terrain to show the best use for the tanks. Photo missions were flown by the Air Corps and photos were rushed by air to the PI team who quickly pieced them together, located and marked enemy positions and distributed pictures and reports to lower units. This called for fast, accurate work and sometimes commanders attacked enemy positions guided by photos taken the same day and processed by the hard-working PI team.

505th Counter Intelligence Detachment

The CIC fights against the unseen enemy — the spies, saboteurs and Nazi ringleaders. While the division rests after a battle, the CIC works to establish security of the division area. During operations, CIC men enter towns with the occupying troops and often go into unconquered sections of a town to cut communications, seal vital records, seize known enemy agents and Nazi leaders. They smell trouble before it starts and crush it at its source. Their work, like most intelligence activities, is usually secret and they receive little credit for the vital work they do.

Interrogators of Prisoners of War Teams Nos. 77 and 78

Linguists of the IPW teams gained knowledge of the enemy's military organization by questioning German PW's. The IPW gathered information from PW's, questioned civilian informants, collected and evaluated documents. Tactically, the linguists were employed in negotiations with the enemy, locating and cutting communications and a hundred other jobs. In static situations, PW's furnished them detailed and accurate information about the enemy. In fast-moving situations, when PW's could give locations of hasty gun positions and enemy intentions, they frequently accompanied patrols and reconnaissance units to take and question prisoners. The IPW team was at all times capable and aggressive and provided an informative picture of the enemy's side of the war.

Order of Battle Team No. 29

The OB team helped keep the division informed of all data regarding the enemy's fighting units. They kept a record of the enemy's forces, including movements, concentrations, organizations, disbandments and types of units. OB worked with other division intelligence teams, circulating and coordinating enemy information so that each team could keep up to date on the enemy situation. OB furnished valuable information in the form of estimates of enemy situations. In this work their records gave the division an idea of how many tanks, guns and personnel it could expect to encounter. Their work served to round out the complete enemy picture.

Military Intelligence Interpreter Team No. 440

The MII team interrogated civilians for detailed information about the defensive and economic potential of Germany. They questioned technicians, factory owners, foreign laborers, refugees and even housewives for enemy information. Their work netted information about the location and nature of defenses inside Germany, results of Allied bombings, location of factories still unbombed, underground installations, enemy critical shortages, the names and addresses of Nazi officials and the movement of enemy forces. They tapped a source of enemy information which proved extremely valuable to the division.

This book has been censored and may be mailed home. It was prepared and published by the Public Relations Office, 5th Armored Division. Photos by U. S. Army Signal Corps and Division personnel. Art by T/5 Robert Hoylman and T/5 Bert Bendit.

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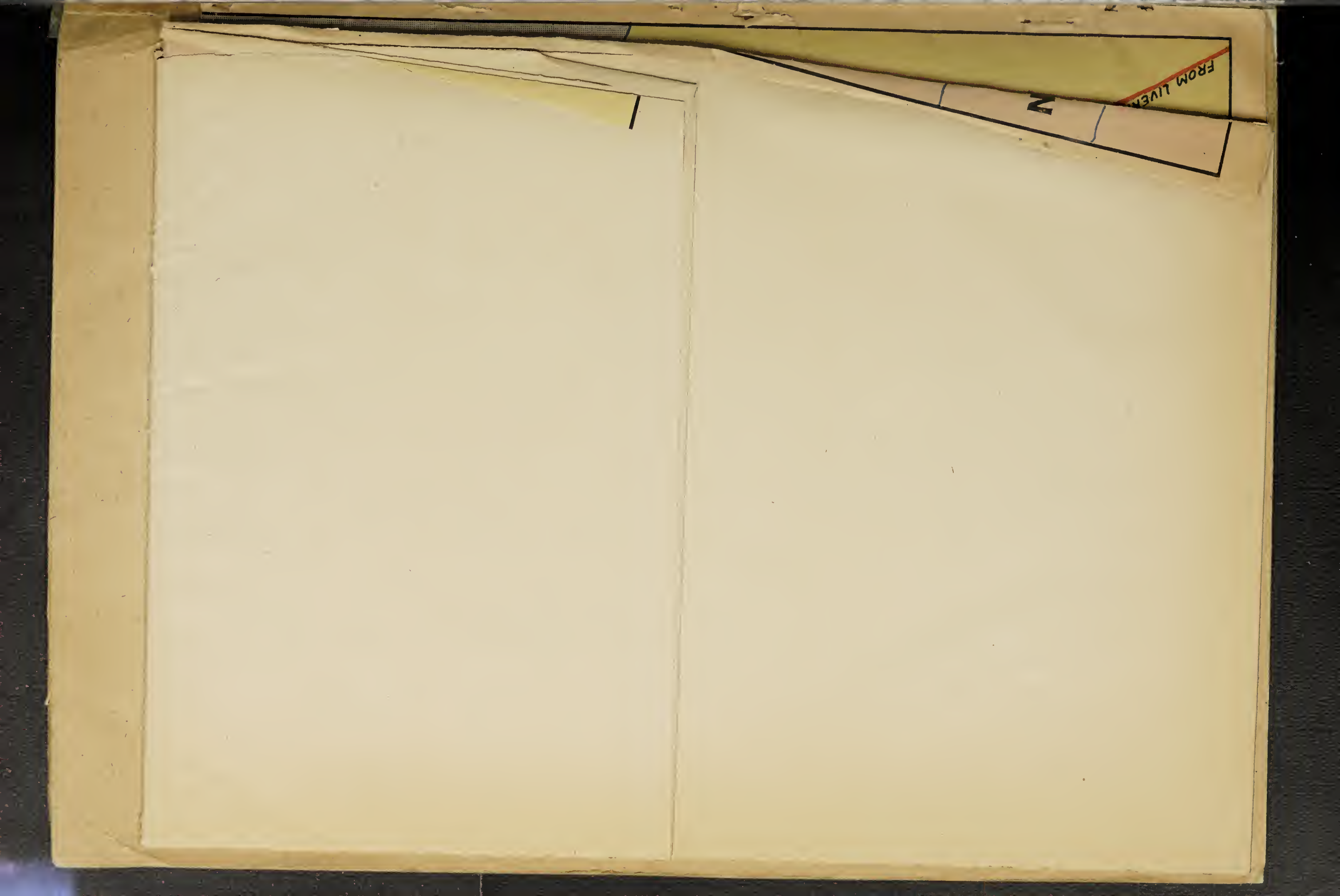

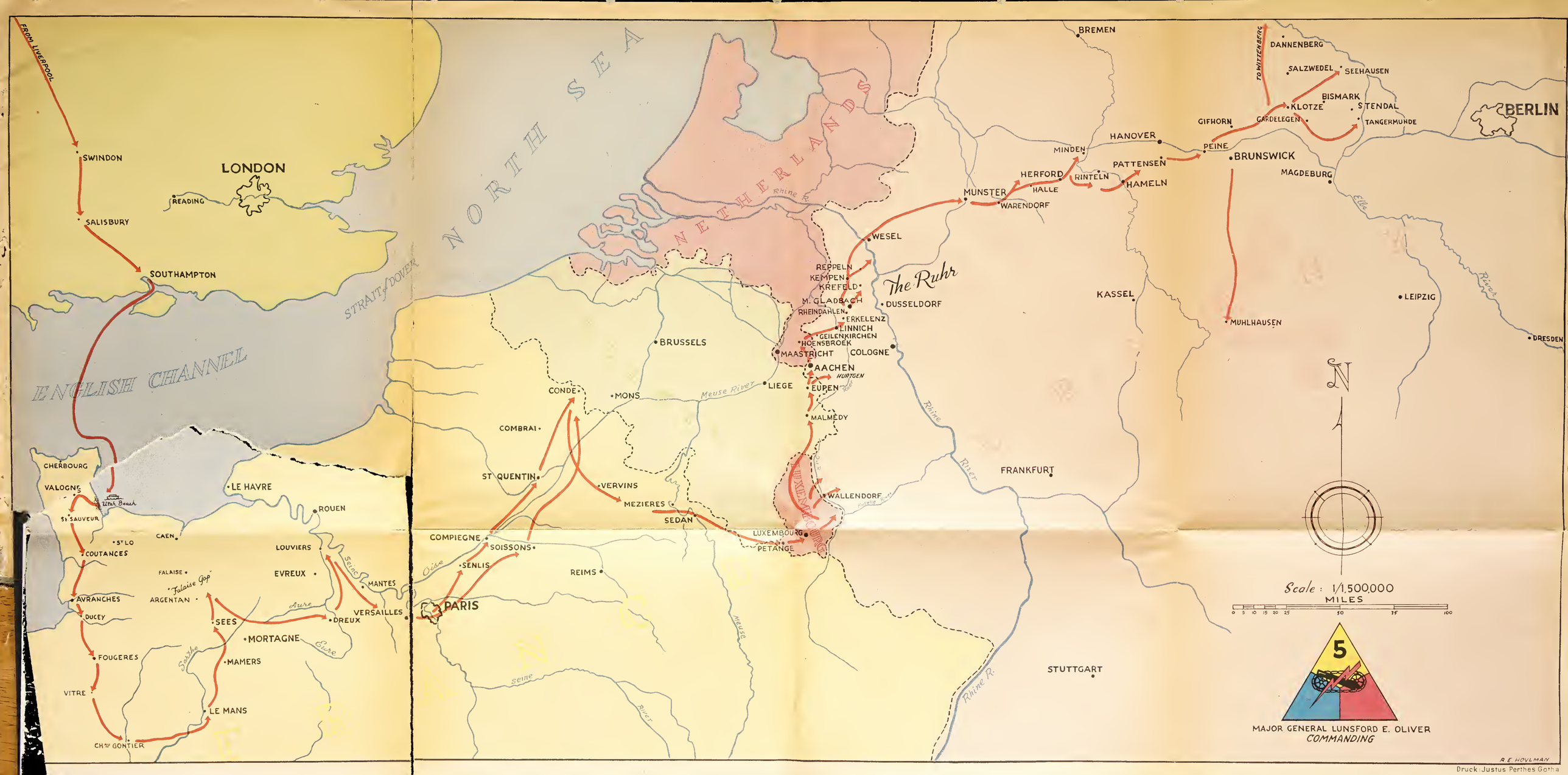

FROM LIVERPOOL
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ENGLISH CHANNEL
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Rhine R.
BREMEN
TO WITTENBERG
DANNENBERG
SALZWEDEL
SEEHAUSEN
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STENDAL
GARDELEGEN
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St SAUVEUR
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